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RADICAL LOCALISM IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY

by

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Abstract

This is an ethnographic study conducted upon third-party sociopolitical movements in American society. The research included participant observation in a Midwestern State Green Party, in addition to the Populist Party of America: a micro-party based in Los Angeles. I examine the prospects for third-party sociopolitical movements fostered by a human ecological transformation: The diffusion of Internet communications within American society.

I contend that this new form of representational space – "Internet virtuality" – offers a potential for third-party organization that is unprecedented. This is due to the decentralized morphology of Internet communications. This communicative design prevents the presence of central gate-keepers who serve as regulators for a dialogical process in which access to modes of communication affording representation is a privilege enjoyed by elites. Additionally, this form of decentralized mass communications can be utilized by political third-parties for the purpose of facilitating a Social Movement Organization that is more adaptive and resilient, which allows for the development of social-action knowledge that can be implemented in order to actualize the third-party's agenda.

My participation in third-party sociopolitical movements came to assume a capacity where I contributed to Internet media campaigns that sought to exploit the insights of the new paradigm in Web-based programming, "Web 2.0." I argue that Web 2.0 and the design patterns, according to which Web 2.0 instances are devised, are extensible to the domain of knowledge development belonging to Public Sociology (Kalleberg, 2005), and actionable for mounting effective third-party movements.

Introduction

This study is intended to contribute to the forging of a social-action knowledge that enables the enactment of radical change to the American political system: A trans-formation through which the prevailing system of ascendancy, along with the interests that sustain it, will be substantially dismantled and dispossessed, leaving in its place a condition in which the preponderance of authority is localized, emplacing political power in provincial civic institutions.

This refitting of our federal system of government will amplify the abilities of individuals to affect the conditions in which they live through participation in local political structures. The institutions forming municipal polities are more accessible to the common individual. Therefore, through the empowerment of local assemblies, individuals will have greater influence over the public policies directly impacting their human ecologies (Park, 1925). For instance, in terms of advancing initiatives, individuals will possess more direct and immediate access to the deliberative processes through which public policies are produced. Plebes will cease to be dependent upon the class of professional surrogates: Those who occupy stations in Washington NGOs, which have procured an advisory capacity to Congressmen and Congressional staffers during the drafting of legislation. As opposed to a state in which the political selves of the common man and woman are shaped by flows and currents rippling through "multitudes" (Hardt & Negri, 2000), individuals will have the opportunity to fashion a unique public persona; a political self that fails to be crammed into the precincts imposed by group definitions, or fails to suffer a public self whose externalizations are muted by the constant racket emitted by chattering classes.

Challenging Centralism

In order to enact such a condition – a political reconfiguration that I reference with the term, "Localism" – it is necessary to challenge the institutions and agents who have an interest in maintaining the present state-of-affairs. American governance is highly centralized, and it is controlled by a party duopoly – Democrats and Republicans – a consolidation that contributes to centralized power. In order to effectively dismantle the centralization of political power in America, the two-party system must be challenged and eventually dislocated from its position of control over the institutions through which sociopolitical power is operationalized.

The Two-party system.

Although Americans often think of the two-party system as the only viable political model for a mature "democracy," it should not be overlooked that during the 19th century third-parties had influential roles in local politics (Disch, 2002). However, as a result of electoral legislation that was passed by Democratic and Republican controlled state legislatures, third-parties were largely pushed into political obscurity. One of the more significant alterations to electoral dealings included the elimination of fusion voting (Disch, 2002). Fusion voting had allowed candidates to concurrently run on multiple ballots. Therefore, a voter could demonstrate support for a third-party while continuing to cast his vote for a competitive opposition candidate. Third-parties, due to the fusion vote, could have substantial impacts upon the platforms adopted by the major parties, both of which had an incentive to tailor their platforms so that third-parties would nominate their candidates.

The Age of Reform and Progressivism. In addition to electoral legislation, which

effectively extended the power of the two national parties into the spheres of state and local politics, the progressive reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries played a vital role in the advancement of centralization. I do not want to criticize many of the reforms that were championed by progressives. Nevertheless, despite this movement's association with a mêlée against plutocracy and corruption – a reform programme intended to enhance American democracy by eliminating the abuses of party machines and by increasing distributional justice – progressives compromised the ability of local populations to self-govern according to the institutions formed from their indigenous socio-cultural conventions.

Progressivism was electrified by an unfortunate vanguard Zeitgeist, resulting in its effort to empower the presidency; an office that progressives perceived as the proponent of the general welfare (Nelson, 2008). The presidency was construed as the most practicable vehicle with which to overcome the backwardness and political narrow sightedness of provincialism. Progressives saw the presidency and the executive branch as an opportunity to rationalize governance. The individuals occupying the positions within the departments and agencies extending from a unitary executive could be selected according to merits, such as erudition and expertise. Governing would be left to those who possessed the intellectual capacity necessary to devise complicated public planning. In short, according to the polity envisioned by progressives, the president and those to whom he delegated authority and from whom he sought counsel were to shoulder a responsibility comparable to what Plato (2009) had envisioned for the "Gold Caste" in The Republic: The president would serve as a philosopher king and his appointments and nominees would act as members of his court.

Unfortunately, by increasing the powers of the executive branch, progressives furthered the consolidation of American governance under a locus of central authority; a process that failed to contribute to the realization of democracy (Nelson, 2008). Rather than furthering American democratization, Progressivism constricted the political possibilities possessed by individuals and communities. It limited popular sovereignty. Power was taken from communities and handed over to the national government; a body that, by definition, is distanced and removed from the geographic localities over which it exercises authority.

Localism and its history.

It is the position taken in this paper that immediacy and familiarity should be prioritized over distance and detachment when determining which person or group should have his or its political will prioritized in the decision-making determinative of policies affecting local populations. I came to adopt this political philosophy, Localism, when participating in the Populist Party of America. It was the position of the party that political decentralization – a condition that promotes Localism – could be used as a device to limit the effects of undesirable forms of governance, due to the fact that no single type of polity could exercise exclusive will over the population. There might be instances of undesirable regimes in regional politics. However, such political forms would be limited in scope, and, furthermore, they would be surrounded by contrasting forms of civic life offering alternatives. Localism, therefore, was intended to cultivate sociopolitical diversification.

From my subsequent readings of American sociopolitical history, I realized that Localism is not a contemporary philosophy that collaborators contributing to the Populist

Party of America had invented. It has been a recurring theme expressed in various historical contexts by popular factions who opposed structures and institutions that were perceived as distanced and alienated from their local forms of life. Localism, for instance, was the preeminent cognitive frame constructed by agitators working to incite a civil war with the British. The monarchy represented an alien power that was too removed from the towns and communities comprising the colonies to be responsive to their local concerns. Localism continued to resonate among anti-Federalists (Borden, Ed., 1965), who opposed the ratification of a constitution embodying a prescription for governance that compromised the sovereignty of states while empowering a remote national polity (Masur and Staloff, year unknown); a sphere of policy deliberation that was detached from the diverse, manifold communities it collectively and individually impacted through executive orders implementing federal legislation and jurisprudence. George Clinton encapsulated anti-Federalist concerns in the first paragraph in his essay, Extent of Territory under Consolidated Government too Large to Preserve Liberty or Protect Property:

> . . . . The recital, or premises on which the new form of government is erected, declares a consolidation or union of all the thirteen parts, or states, into one great whole, under the form of the United States, for all the various and important purposes therein set forth. But whoever seriously considers the immense extent of territory comprehended within the limits of the United States, together with the variety of its climates, productions, and commerce, the difference of extent, and number of inhabitants in all; the dissimilitude of interest, morals, and politics, in almost every one, will receive it as an intuitive truth, that a consolidated republican form of government therein, can never form

a perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to you and your posterity, for to these objects it must be directed. This unkindred legislature therefore, composed of interests opposite and dissimilar in their nature, will in its exercise, emphatically be like a house divided against itself (Borden, ed., 1965).

Although the Federalist victory directed America along a counterrevolutionary course in its sociopolitical development, Localism did not cease to reverberate and inspire the practice of oppositional politics. The Whiskey Rebellion consisted of Western Pennsylvania farmers who objected to the inequities of Hamiltonian taxation policies. They realized that whiskey was the only feasible cash crop and, therefore, was the only source of monetary revenue for a population isolated from the rest of the country by the Alleghenies (Cornell, 2006). They interpreted Hamilton's efforts to consolidate whiskey production among large scale industrial manufacturers along the East Coast as partisan and unrepresentative of their own local interests. It was imperious and worthy of their militant confrontation, which was directed against Federal tax collecting agents.

Localism can additionally be observed in the antimonopoly and antitrust advocacies undertaken by popular factions during the Gilded Age: The period, following the Civil War, during which America experienced massive industrial expansion. It was the era in which robber barons accumulated enormous wealth and had unseemly influence over political processes. It was also the time when state legislators in conjunction with the jurisprudence of state and federal courts – whose judges engaged in judicial activism, overhauling common law in order for it to be accommodative to capitalist interests – constructed the legal fiction as it currently stands, the corporation: A

fixture belonging to the institutional economy that is endowed with legal provisions that benefit members of the investor class and their "moneyed interests," such as the principle of "limited liability" (Drutman, 2003).

Historians, such as Richard Hofstadter (2005), misrepresented populists of the latter half of the 19th century as unsophisticated, xenophobic reactionaries, who were interested in reversing the inevitable progression of American society from an agrarian, village-based social organization into an urban, industrialized society. Despite disparaging renderings depicting the discursive structures produced by the Agrarian Revolt as manifestations of an irrational luddite nostalgia for an irretrievable past, recent scholars have reevaluated the populism of the 19th century using alternative meta-theoretical conceptions of history. Gretchen Ritter (1997) for instance, has analyzed the political ideologies of third-party movements, not as remonstrations clamored by historical dead-enders, but as incidents involved in a contingent historical process, whose outcome was contested. Consequently, she presents the polemics and proposals articulated and disseminated by Greenbacks and Populists as intellectually serious and politically viable. They were credible programmatic policy recommendations that were intended to configure American society according to a conception of the good life that stood in contrast and in defiance to contemporary processes of corporatization. Free-grangers, for example, who opposed the corporatization and resulting privatization of the plains by land syndicates, were not ripples of discontent in a fated historical current leading to the proprietorship and partitioned fencing of the American steppes.

There is no reason to concede that the present political economy – what we can refer to as "corporate capitalism" – is the natural outgrowth of our social maturation. Had

certain events and interrelated struggles turned out otherwise, history could have been directed according to values underlying the American ethos of "producerism" (Ritter, 1997); subsequently, incurring a condition of petty-capitalism: A social system consisting of self-sufficient, politically individuated citizens. In other words, America had the potential to embody a Jeffersonian democracy as opposed to the present state-of-affairs: A society consisting of employed masses habitually deferential to corporate hierarchy.

From understanding and appreciating the social context of this period, the Gilded Age, we can empathize with the apprehension and resentment that local populations directed toward the increasing empowerment of the corporation. Trusts and monopolies were not simply instances of excessive vertical integration or market consolidation; they were forms of colonization that exploited local communities and their labors. They captured resources and dispossessed people of the commodities produced from their work. The American ethic of producerism disdained these "moneyed interests," which were detached from – albeit in legal control and in possession – of actual embodiments of production. They were considered to be alien interferences in the affairs of those who actually contributed to the economic vitality and subsequent wealth of local populations.

In the contemporary landscape, there is a growing return to Localism. I am not referring to the Tea Party. Instead, I am designating phenomena, such as the emerging economic paradigm which reinterprets economic principles according to the interests of local economies (Houston & Eness, 2009; Civic Economics, 2004). This economic localism has produced research that effectively argues for provincial public policies that prevent national and, worse, multinational retailers from entering and inevitably monopolizing local markets. Such foreign agents extract more resources than they

reinvest in the local economy. Rather than procuring the merchandise, with which they stock their shelves, from local producers, these retailers import from distanced manufacturers that exploit cheaper, often, offshore labor. The promises of low paying jobs and cheap, knockoff products does not recompense for the net drain upon the local economy incurred by retail chains. The same principle holds true for other service sector industries.

Localism and Sociopolitical power.

Localism is a political philosophy that is opposed to a tendency in American politics that this paper references as centralization: A social process through which political power is accumulated in a locus that is distanced, removed from local communities, their unique human ecologies, and their provincial political institutions. The notion of political centralization, however, is not to suggest that politics and power should be conceived according to a pre-Foucauldian framework (Foucault, 1990). There is certainly a micro-physical dimension to centralized government that allows its policies to be concretely manifested so that they affect local institutions and practices.

Power relationships can assume multiple forms involving varying degrees of immediacy. Incarceration, for instance, is a type of disciplinary power (Foucault, 2005), that consists of direct physical coercion in the form of confinement and regimentation. On the other end of the spectrum, power can assume a regulatory form (Foucault, 1990). In these instances, power is intended to shape and control populations or groups. The differences between disciplinary and regulatory power do not constitute a contrast between mutually exclusive objects, so the presence of one does not entail the negation of the other.

"Biopower" (Foucault, 1990) – the strategic use of regulatory power – must in some way touch individual bodies if it is to have an effect upon the behavioral patterns instantiated by a population. In this sense, regulatory policies are an attempt to integrate and appropriate the disciplinary power distributed throughout the corpus of society: A flow that can be analogized to the vascular system belonging to the human physiology. Power circulates according to morphologies that diminish in scale as power moves closer to the bodies that will be impacted by its actualization. Regulatory power is arterial. It is directed to major parts of the body; what is comparable to the population and sub-aggregates of the population. However, in order to sustain the body, blood must eventually make contact with individual cells. Correspondingly, in its most direct connection to the human subject, power circulates according to a capillary distribution. When in this form, it is embodied in the work of disciplinarians, such as educators, therapists, social workers, medical doctors, agents of law enforcement, and criminologists, to name a few.

Despite some of the implications following from the metaphor above, it would be a mistake to think of regulation and disciplinarian praxes as forming an integrated system. There is a disjuncture between the two morphologies. The integration of regulation and discipline into a single systematization is by no means pre-given. The various disciplinarian professions are largely the product of differing historical circumstances, entailing divergent social contexts out of which each set of practices emerged. As a result, disciplinary knowledges developed in response to particular concerns. Depending upon the socio-historical context, practitioners came to problematize the empirical field and to identify which exemplars to emulate when

engaging in problem-solving practices. Nevertheless, on an ad hoc basis, through the implementation of strategies formulated as part of regulatory initiatives, different disciplinary practices can be fitted together in order to conjunctively carry out biopower policy. Therefore, it would also be misbegotten not to recognize the macro-interventions conducted, in the case of America, by state and national governments – agencies that are generative of biopower – as initiatives that affect the practices of disciplinarian agents operating in local contexts.

Consequently, centralization is both immediate and removed. It is the remoteness and separateness of central authority that estranges its disciplinarian agents from the local populations with whom they interact, enacting a state where the materialization of power, from the perspective of local inhabitants, constitutes the advancement of alien interests; what amounts to imperialism. The interests undergirding centralization emanate from a standpoint exogenous to the milieu in which its extensions intervene. Of course, the interests propelling centralization – what herein is referred to as centralism – are often ideologically justified under pretenses that conflate local interests with universal interests; i.e., freer-market proponents often contend that all populations are benefitted by market liberalization, despite the displacement suffered by members of some regional labor markets.

Centralization and democracy.

The centralization of power has led to a condition in which the democracy once extant in Colonial America has been paved over by a system of Pluralism: A political structure in which elites, who assume positions in government and other institutions wielding power, purport to represent the interests of the social groups to which they

belong. This political system makes a distinction between elites and masses. Elites are endowed with governing responsibilities. Masses, contrastingly, can only impact public policy by affecting elites – directly or indirectly – through the electoral process, including various forms of campaign support or opposition, or through networking and quid pro quo. Of course, Pluralists often insist that elites, for the most part, form of discrete groups with little overlapping. Therefore, elites do not form a single cohesive body. Nevertheless, such a notion has been strongly challenged by empirical findings that have supported Marxist interpretations of society (Manley, 1983).

In a system of Pluralism, individuality and the unique interests that are bound to it are deemphasized while group identities along with the collective interests with which they are associated are prioritized. Under such a condition, political identity is constructed in compulsory conformity with the parameters defined by the various specifications attributed to multitudes. Consequently, the political selves of individuals are relegated to a state of *existential inauthenticity* (Heidegger, 1962). That is, rather than possessing the opportunity to construct a unique political biography, individuals are left to conform to the expectations attached to the social identities with which they are ascribed. The possibility of a "World," in the sense given to the term by Hannah Arendt (McGowan, 1997) is only available to a small minority of elites who are public figures in the arenas of state and national politics. For those who belong to masses, they are confined to the private realm of society, unable to project a political persona to interlocutors collectively constituting a political public.

I am conscious of and sympathetic to the arguments produced by advocates contributing to identity politics, and I realize that the "ideology of individualism" has

operated as a rhetorical device obfuscating structural inequities that can only be adequately conceptualized according to aggregate dimensions. Nevertheless, proponents of identity politics have never sufficiently addressed a problematical feature laden in their political philosophy. The political models that they advance (i.e., Young, 1990) are merely forms of ultra-pluralism; meaning, they advocate restructuring American government so that the political opportunities afforded to individuals are even more tied, not to citizenship, but to group identity. Such proposals would exacerbate the most pervasive and arguably impacting sociopolitical stratification in American society: The difference between elites and masses: Those who govern versus those who are governed. It is the position articulated in the research and analysis presented in this study that Localism provides a more desirable alternative to this present state of sociopolitical affairs.

The question then becomes, how can Localism be realized? The following review of literature is a summation of some of the existing work offering insights into present matrices of sociopolitical power and the forces that are causing them to transform. By analyzing the current cultural and technological transitions and their impact upon political economic and sociopolitical institutions, I intend to begin to map out a strategy for the implementation of Localism.

Literature Review

This review of research and theory encompasses portions of the fields of Communications, Sociology, Political Science, and to a lesser extent Computer Science. The review is focused upon the topic of electronic Information Technology and its relationship to the sociological properties exhibited by American civics in addition to

sociopolitical movements and their SMOs. This is, obviously, a primitively defined subject that is arguably – due to the impreciseness of its definition – extensible to a set of literature that encompasses far more research than I include in this brief summation of scholarly themes. Therefore, I make no pretensions to have exhaustively covered all of the material. Nonetheless, I am fairly confident that I have captured the predominant topoi emerging as a result of the interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research that has been devoted to this topic.

Computer Mediated Communications.

Computer Science, Sociology and Communications have been synthesized into a distinctive domain of research, Computer Mediated Communications, (CMC), which is inter-disciplinary. CMC refers to human interaction that is conducted through computers. This can include mundane activities, such as emailing and chat messaging over the Internet (McQuail, 2005). It can also include text messaging, (SMS).

Computer Mediated Communication and its impact upon civic institutions and sociopolitical movements is a relatively new problematization that is still, overwhelmingly, addressed through cross-disciplinary, as opposed to interdisciplinary, research programs. Additionally, the study of electronic communications is a complicated affair due to a peculiar relationship between the work currently being done and the empirical domain that is being investigated. Of course, issues related to reactivity emerge in every form of empirical research. However, in this scenario the effects are exacerbated because those who study the domain of electronic-communications are sometimes concurrently charged with structuring the objects and relations falling under the purview of what additionally qualify as the ontology defining the objects falling within their

considerations. For example, in the field of communications, there currently exists some contention regarding how electronic databases should be constructed. One side of the issue contends that the databases should be structured in order to preserve disciplinarity, and, in fact, cater to researchers who are interested in finding resources falling under the extension of the disciplines to which they belong. However, in other instances, disciplinarity is not a consideration, which influences the construction of databases that, when queried, return results that span across numerous disciplines; a condition that facilitates interdisciplinary research. However, agents who are attempting to find relative results for queries intended to return references to studies falling within their particular discipline are stymied by the framework and how it defines relevancy.

Those in Communications, who study electronic forms of human intercourse, have been involved in the design and implementation of electronic archives, intended to provide more accessibility to literary materials for members of various intellectual pursuits. Whether the designers decide to organize the electronic archives along the lines of disciplinarity or in accord with an interdisciplinary schema will alter the composition of the empirical domain. Therefore, the researchers can be said to be having a formative effect upon the ontology: the domain of objects and properties that they purport to observe, record, and analyze, but often neglect to register that they help to create in the process. Their studies do not merely exposit the empirical domain; additionally, by contributing to the discourse, they constitute that sphere of reality.

Electronic democracy.

Electronic democracy refers to democratic politic practices that make use of information technology. Therefore, there is an overlap between e-democracy and CMCs.

The definition of democracy, of course, remains problematic, and I shall – throughout this document – attempt to discredit some ordinary definitions of democracy. However, operationally, I will adopt the parsimonious and the unpresumptuous definition of democracy that is provided by Dana Nelson (2008): Democracy consists of when the will of the people becomes public policy.

Early warnings of the Internet dangers.

Discourse emanating from political science during early 2000s was, often, either alarmist or dismissive when it came to appraising the consequences of Internet diffusion. The alarmist commentary pertaining to the Internet was overly pessimistic and based upon unfounded futurism. One such concern manifested from worries enunciated by the adherents of Madisonian Pluralism. They saw – and some continue to see – the Internet and the collapse of geographical spaces – as a threat to republicanism (Nye & Kamarck, Eds., 2002). This is due to the possible fomenting of factions across diverse regions and populations, which poses the risk of establishing a sociopolitical hegemony.

The other criticism of the Internet is the latter's bipolar opposite. It is the antithesis of the Madisonian critique. We were warned of impending tribalism resulting from the diffusion of the Internet. This thesis propounds that technological innovation, allowing consumers of Internet-distributed journalism, political commentary, and even popular media to select what contents they consume, will compromise the integrative function performed by other types of mass communications. Since the Internet allows for the personalization of content – a feature facilitated by the filtering capacities of rendering applications – i.e., RSS readers – people will not be exposed to a diversity of perspectives, leading to the loss of a "shared stock of knowledge" (Schutz, 1960). The

contents that the people consume will reinforce preexisting ideological prejudices; rather than exposing members of the public to a diversity of perspectives; a function generative of inter-subjectivity. There is evidence in the literature suggesting that people tend to consume Internet-distributed contents that reinforce their ideological prejudices. However, research upon the diffusions of earlier mass communicative technologies indicates that people, nevertheless, remain aware of alternative ideologies and forms of mass media (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001).

Following the crash.

After the first Dot Com collapse, (Dalton, 2004), most of the early work pertaining to electronic democracy was rejected due to feelings maintaining that the original interpretation of the Internet as ushering forth a transformed social order, embodying a more participatory democracy, were impetuous and formulated with excessive optimism. Following the deflation of the tech sector and the ensuing recession, scholars – as a reaction to the ebullient speculations inciting the economic bubble – exhibited a dismissive intellectual pattern when reappraising the Internet's civic implications. Consequently, the scholarship downplayed the significance of the social relationships forged through the adoption of Internet technologies. More specifically, the literature of this period often discounted the prospect that the Internet would function as a catalyst for sociopolitical change. In support of such conclusions, research performed upon the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections (i.e., PEW Research Center, 2005) were frequently cited. These studies concluded that in juxtaposition to other forms of mass media relatively small percentages of Americans had used the Internet as a source from which to acquire information about candidacies and their platforms. What is more, even

those who did use the Internet as a source of information typically patronized websites maintained by news sources that were already established in other conventional media, such as newspaper and television.

Additionally, according to this research and commentary, academics have historically demonstrated a tendency to overestimate the impact that new mass communicative technologies will have upon sociopolitical and political economic institutions. For instance, radio and television were originally projected to dramatically alter the social landscape. However, such prognostications were later interpreted as hyperbolic. The Internet, according to this discourse, might change society. However, the change would be, "piecemeal," occurring over decades (Grazian, 2005). I should further mention that change and continuity are in the eyes of the beholder. Therefore empirical reevaluations of the diffusion of communicative technologies, such as television, might illumine extraordinary alterations to the Human Condition if analyzed from the perspective of disciplines, such as cultural studies.

Internet as faddism. The Internet as faddism theme came about after the Dot Com collapse in the early 2000s. The event caused commentators to relegate the Internet, in its totality, to a phenomenon warranting no more attention than what was ordinarily devoted to a fleeting trend (Kamarck & Nye, Eds., 2002). In other words, the Internet was conceived as something that need not preoccupy serious scholars interested in exploring the salient issues affecting American civics. The justifications offered for such conclusions seem to have invoked the following thematic consistency: The thinness of the interactions prevented the development of the trust required to foment substantive communities. Phenomena disclosed in research that had been performed upon Web

activity, such as “gender-bending,” were often referenced as exemplary of the superficiality of Internet interactions (Kamarck & Nye, Eds., 2002). Gender-bending takes place when an individual who is engaged in some form of “chat” presents a “false” gender to ‘his’ or ‘her’ interlocutor. Apparently, according to the discourse, this phenomenon, or phenomena, which are similar to it, occurs fairly frequently in virtual interactions.

Adductions inferred from Internet incidents, such as “gender-bending,” supplied justification for the contention that virtual communities were societally epiphenomenal. Their apparent thinness was thought to prevent substantive social change because they could foment no trust. How can trust among counterparts solidify when events, such as gender-bending, occur? Furthermore, people can enter virtual communities and leave them effortlessly, without any emotional unease stemming from physical reencounters with those with whom relationships had been severed or neglected.

These considerations are related to the work that has been done by Robert Putnam (2001), who gave a gloomy account of American civil society during the 1990s. He calls upon the concept, Social Capital, when establishing the negative consequences arising from a lack of substantive, community interactions; forms of engagement that are face-to-face, not disembodied and virtual. Successful community projects precipitate the accrual of trust, which, in turn, renders community members more likely to engage in future communal projects. The diffusion of the Internet, which diminishes face-to-face interaction and the successful projects that might result from such communal interactions, negatively impacts the production of trust among community counterparts. Social Capital is based upon trust. Therefore, it is appropriate to ask, Can Social Capital be fomented in

virtual spaces? Putnam claimed to be agnostic on the potentials of the Internet as a substitute for the face-to-face interactions that had been traditionally cultivated by embodied community organizations in American civil society.

Bowling Alone is a classic, and it has inspired a generation of sociological dissertations (Putnam, 2001) . Nonetheless, it is not productive to expend more than a few moments treating all of the excessive complaints leveled by Putnam and his adherents; aspersions that they have directed upon the state of American civil society. As the Internet continues to transform the way we consume journalism and entertainment; the way we relate to others; and the platforms used to achieve publicity for political messages, Putnam's agnosticism toward Internet potentials appears luddite. Rather than lamenting the loss of traditional civil society in America, one is better off discovering new possibilities for modes of collective behavior, which have been, in particular, engendered by Internet infrastructures.

Organizational Theory and the Internet.

Following the discourse that assumed a dismissive posture toward the Internet in response to the Dot Com Crash, some scholars attempted to revamp the work contributing to the study of electronic democracy (Fountain, 2001). I would characterize this discourse as organizational theory that concentrates upon the impact upon organizations resulting from their adoptions and implementations of various information management strategies and Information Technologies. Although not entirely dismissive of the Internet's potential relevancy to American sociopolitical affairs, it did embody conservatism in respect to its interpretation of the changes that could be ushered in through the digitalization and inter-connectedness of governmental workflow processes.

Electronic democracy, as conceptualized in these studies, does not involve a qualitative break with the form that government had assumed. Rather, the purpose and role of government, including the power structures responsible for the determination of public policies and their administration, are conceptualized according to Management Business Administration strategies, such as Customer-service Relations Management, (CRM): The ability of a firm – or, in this case, government agency – to deliver its services to the population in a way that fosters customer, or citizen, satisfaction. It includes techniques for the retention and retrieval of customer information that is gathered over the course of the firm's relationship with the consumer. If relevant information can be quickly accessed by the firm's customer care representatives, then it can be utilized for the purpose of improving the customer's experience.

This discourse emphasizes the need for government agencies to adopt intranet infrastructures, because they allow for the rapid integration of streams of data gathered through the various appendages of government that interface with citizens. Further, an underlying premise to these studies consists of a presupposition that the ultimate teleology of an organization is to increase its performativity, allowing its processes to operate more efficiently and to produce their sanctioned outputs more prolifically. This literature is of little interest for those who desire to transcend considerations that are constrained to the parameters imposed by preexisting sociopolitical structures. Nevertheless, there is one interesting aspect to this literature, which, I suspect, is the result of the familiarity of the researchers contributing to this field with Information Technology. Specifically, I am referring to the theoretical incorporation of concepts derived from IT, such as "virtualism:" A term that has a different meaning in this context

than the sense it acquires when used in other passages of this document. It is not a space for people, necessarily, to interact. It is used to designate temporary memory spaces that are employed in order to execute an application while leaving no legacy when the program and its corresponding process have ceased to run.

In terms of this strand of organizational theory, "virtualism" translates into ad hoc agencies being formed to commit governmental functions, as opposed to permanently restructuring the bureaucracy (Fountain, 2001). The reason the term, "virtualism," is apropos as a reference for *ad hoc*, interdepartmental agencies is that such teams leave no footprints upon the system spaces in which they operate after they have been executed. There is no employment related legacy since there are no permanent changes to the human resource composition of the firm.

Re-enchantment

The emerging technologies associated with digitalism and the Internet have arguably created a condition in which the Weberian "Iron Cage," has been nullified. Consequently, man's existence has been "re-enchanted," (Dalton, 2004, p. 16).

Political-economy. The expression, "re-enchantment," is, of course, an allusion to Weber and his disenchantment thesis (Kalberg, Ed., 2005): The socio-cultural homogenization of populations – a condition conducive to industrial capitalism – resulting in a state where everything becomes blasé. Standardization was crucial in order for populations to be disposed to behave in a manner reflecting the organizational imperatives associated with industrial capitalism. It was during this period of the Human Condition – the onslaught of industrialization – that clocks became prevalent. They were placed on walls; they were tethered to belts using chains and then nestled into trouser

pockets; and they came to be worn on the wrists of individuals. The use of hours and seconds – as opposed to agrarian life, which could model its daily routine according to sunup, noon, and sunset – was a necessary measure if counterparts were to synchronize there activities with a level of precision necessary for the functioning of bureaucracy and the operation of machineries tended to on the factory floor. As the new organization of time indicated, industrial production called for the pronounced homogenization of the behaviors instantiated by individuals contributing to economic production.

In opposition to the logic undergirding industrial capitalism, a new economic order has taken hold (Lazonick, 2005) and – rather than conformity and predictability – it promotes counter-conformity and creativity, (Castells Ed., 2004). We can call this new Zeitgeist the, "Hacker Ethic," (Castells Ed., 2004) – a culture in which eccentricity is associated with innovation. Conversely, that which has been customized into "standard operating procedures," is perceived with apprehension and by executives with an eye toward managerial interdiction, because its "habitualized" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) procedures are interpreted as the curtailment of innovation.

The encouragement of unpredictable creative impulses is related to the logic forming this mode of production. In the "informational economy" – what marks an epochal departure from industrial capitalism – the primary mode of production involves the generation of new information management technologies and strategies; commodities that are intellectual in nature. These knowledge constructs can be exploited for various purposes, such as electronic media design, for which firms, such as Adobe, have released software packages; i.e., *Adobe Creative Suite 5*: a bundle of applications that includes *InDesign*, which can be used by publishers of print materials for the purposes of page

design. The important thing to keep in mind is that this form of production cannot always be scheduled. It is difficult, in certain occasions, to even predict what the creative event will ultimately produce.

This form of production calls for creativity and individuality. Therefore, the charisma associated with genius – and all of its other connotations, such as eccentricity – have become desirable behavioral attributes for knowledge-workers to possess. Unlike the cultural condition associated with industrial capitalism, such traits are now cultivated by employers (Castells, Ed., 2004). If we look to the moguls who currently possess celebrity in the culture associated with the tech sector, we can find instances of the "genius" that are exemplary of success. Steve Jobs serves as a prototype of this type of persona. He is considered eccentric and innovative. Further, he has learned how to exploit these public perceptions in order to create an allure for his products. He has constructed a persona that allows him to be an insider and an outsider, contemporaneously. In other words, he is the nonconformist who works in the establishment. As a result, he has amassed a cult of personality evidenced in rituals consisting of technology enthusiasts waiting hours in line for the release of a new Apple product, such as the I-phone or the I-pad.

The New Economy has expanded the heterogeneity among producers. The production line has been replaced by the industrial consortium, which is charged with devising industry standards that ensure interoperability (Lazonick, 2005). Therefore, many producers can participate and compete when supplying parts that will be assembled into finished products. Consequently, no single firm will hold a monopoly on the standards of the industry. For example, when it came to putting together my computer, I

chose a motherboard manufactured by ASUS that possesses an AMD3 Socket (the place in which the processor is fitted). However, I could have elected to build upon an NVIDIA, MSI, Gigabot, or any number of motherboard manufacturers as an alternative, but I elected to use ASUS due to its reliability and my familiarity with its products. My motherboard has an onboard graphics card built by ATI, which was recently purchased by AMD. Nevertheless, I elected to use a more powerful NVIDIA graphics card, instead, since it was already in my possession. The reason why these different manufacturers can offer competing parts for the same assembly line is due to the existence of the open standards that are established in order to allow for interoperability.

Neoliberalism. Organizational theory is not in and of itself the embodiment of the re-enchantment thesis. Nevertheless, in this context, organizational theory's emphasis upon non-traditional, 'virtual' forms of employment bares resemblance to some of the themes expressed by the re-enchantment discourse. Re-enchantment celebrates the fracturing of the traditional workspace. One is no longer the "organization-man," (Whyte, 1956). Rather, he is an intellectual laborer who must work according to his or her own creative impulses. Therefore, firms no longer impose rigid environments, (Florida, 2002); instead, they attempt to foster loose, flexible working spaces that stimulate intellectual creativity, often blurring the distinction between work, on one hand, and domesticity and leisure, on the other. Google, for instance, allows employees to bring their pets into the workplace and the firm provides onsite daycare for parents with young children. In particular, the organizational theories that I have covered are related to re-enchantment's tendency to celebrate many of the implications that are attributable to the proliferation of the neoliberal model of political economy: A form of life that emphasizes individual self-

reliance, which goes hand in hand with virtual employment because under this condition the laborer is detached from the firm. His employment is now ad hoc and contingent and he must tend to matters, such as health insurance, through his own devices.

There is an insidious aspect to this. The use of contingent labor – or, 'virtual employment' – has become, despite its name, a permanent aspect to the human resource management strategies implemented by firms in "the New Economy" (Lazonick, 2005). The defenders of the, "casual labor market," persistently fail to mention that the institution of seniority – and the correlative rise in compensation – is not necessarily an aspect belonging to this new system of reciprocity. Apologists for the New Economy claim that employees are "leapfrogging" to better occupations. However, they lack longitudinal data – related to career trajectories – which can be used to justify such claims by demonstrating that people are earning more and more as they continue to, "leapfrog," from one contract to the next.

Decentralization. Manuel Castells considers decentralization a necessary condition if a society is to effectively compete in the Information Age. In support of this conclusion, he rendered an interesting argument against many popular narratives depicting the series of events which led to the demise of the Soviet Empire. According to Castells, it was not Reagan's rapid military buildup coupled with his artful backchannel diplomacy that ultimately incited the Soviet collapse. Rather, the implosion of the communist empire primarily resulted from the structure of its communications infrastructure. Historically, the Soviets, in order to promote ideological homogeneity, concentrated on the development of technologies such as the loudspeaker, through which party doctrine could be rendered audible throughout the spaces inhabited by its public. The United States,

contrarily, directed its efforts toward innovations in telephonic technologies: A medium of mass communications that is relatively decentralized, where the ability to initiate communications is distributed throughout society.

Drawing attention to the different trajectories of technological innovation was designed to illumine larger social processes. The United States, on the one hand, permitted communications and the transmittance of information to occur, largely, in the absence of centralized control; thus, allowing all societal sectors and social standpoints to contribute to the dialecticism through which divergent knowledge streams are synthesized into new orders of knowledge. The Soviets, due to their attempt to manage the flow of information, could not leverage as effectively its population's creative potentials. Therefore, the Soviet Union could not innovate with as much rapidity, leading to the economic stagnation that proved fatal for the communist empire.

Castells and re-enchantment.

Although not exactly a neoliberal apologia, the work of Castells in the 1990s and early 2000s has romanticized the casual labor market. I refer to this genre of literature as re-enchantment because Castells believed that the diffusion of Internet technologies – or "Informationalism," as he calls it – would lead to a "Network Society," which would go hand in hand with multiculturalization: A condition where a dominant group, as it constructs its majority identity, takes on facets belonging to various cultures associated with minority identities. The protrusion and profusion of multiple forms of life – the cultural practices belonging to minority identities– would re-enchant the existence of the organization-man. He would have more from which to choose when consuming. Additionally, since he has been liberated from the firm and its insistence upon conformity

to the standards structuring the organization, he has been provided the socio-cultural space necessary to reinvented himself economically – conversions that he must make time and time again. The reinvention of oneself involves autodidactic undertakings, so that this self-modeling, amorphous agent can re-skill himself before entering into markets competing for more abundant, better compensated, or emergent types of work. This will allow the economic agent to continually adapt to the shifting states instantiated by an economy that will undergo constant reconfigurations resulting from the collapse of spatial distances; a convergence of geographies incurred by the diffusion of "Informationalism" (Castells, 1997), resulting in the acceleration of social process.

Castells, early on, offered a positive assessment of the changing cultural and socioeconomic conditions, transforming as a result of the digital technologies connected to the expansion of the Internet (Castells, 1997). As touched upon above, Castells, (1997), characterized this emerging social condition as the Network Society: Associational relationships that could form, dissolve, and reform according to different morphologies while adapting to the needs of a rapidly developing economy whose vitality is depended upon the creativity harnessed from manifold cultural enclaves. The ideas emanating from the diversity of cultures, belonging to this embodiment of multiculturalization, can now be synthesized due to the availability of Net based interconnectedness.

From this short description, one might already suspect that Castells had fallen victim to the rhetoric associated with neoliberal Greenspan-speak (Greenspan, 2007). In defense of Castells, however, he wrote during the "Clintonian Era of Good Feelings." This was a time when we were duped by analytic devices, such as the implementation of the econometric function, "the hedonic deflator," (Freidman, 2003) into thinking that we

were becoming increasingly wealthy; a change that was impacting all of America's socioeconomic sections. The hedonic deflator adjusts inflation in order to reflect the gains in productivity had by industrial niches, such as computer manufacturing. Since the prices of computers have remained relatively stable despite the fact that they have been enhanced greatly in terms of their use-value, inflation is adjusted, according to the hedonic deflator, in order to reflect the increased purchasing power of the consumer, who pays the same amount for products that incite greater pleasures. This adjustment is probably in good order. However, it can distort one's perception of economic well-being because other historical periods can no longer be compared with the current state-of-affairs without skewing. One economic condition will be calculated using the hedonic deflator while another might not have had such an adjusted, leading to erroneous comparisons when it comes to economic vitality.

In reality the economic boom was mostly a projection of distorted conditions. In addition to the hedonic deflator, family income (Freidman, 2003) was invoked in order to obfuscate stagnating wages; a trend suffered by the middle-class and working-class during the majority of the past thirty years. Family income was stated as rising since households were increasingly drawing upon the incomes of both male and female adults; thereby, increasing the income of households despite the stagnation, or decline, of real wages in the American economy.

Castells and social theory. Castells is not a postmodernist (2004). Nevertheless, he counters the global democracy thesis – as it has been propounded by Habermas (Scheuerman, 2008), and others – with an argument contending that the collapse of geographic spaces will result in a global community of divergent cultures. Culturally

unique groups will be compelled to exploit Web technologies in order to express their uniqueness in relation to other cultures, and they will be motivated to participate in this globalized forum out of a curiosity regarding the differences they possess in juxtaposition to other cultural forms. However, the global forum for communications – created from the expansion of Informationalism – should not be interpreted as the reduction of social differences, eventually forming a cosmopolitan culture. Instead, groups will retain their differences; however, the differences among groups will be examined in relation to one another out of a general drive for cultures to express themselves.

Castells and community. From what has been stated about Castells, it appears that he does not have a concern with community and the impact that the emerging Network Society is having upon communal life. Instead, he seems preoccupied with the increased individualism that has been made possible by the proliferation of the Network Society. He emphasizes this new social space – the personal room for self-differentiation that is allowed within social networks – at the expense of Gemeinschaft (Tonnies, 2005). This conclusion, however, is not entirely accurate. Castells (1997) theorizes that emotively absorbing interrelations, which define communities, will be simulated by the Network Society due to the proliferation of the social relationships in which an actor is entangled. These associations, which are often transient in duration, incite within individuals affective sparks that provide glimmers of Gemeinschaft. When multiplied, these networking relationships can culminate into a feeling that approximates community. Granted, any single network tie will fail to give the emotional satisfaction that one associates with embodied intimacies – a deficiency that results from the ephemeral nature

of networking ties. However, when compounded these social bonds generate a sense of communal membership.

Castells and economic inequality. The rising tide of inequality, (Freidman, 2003), was not lost upon Castells. Castells did happen to embrace the casual labor market that is endorsed by neoliberalism as a positive social development. Castells interpreted the move from traditional employment to one of contractual labor as a transition entailing the emancipation of the American worker from the confines of corporate organization. However, Castells insisted that such an economic transformation should be coupled by adequate expansions to the welfare state, (2004). He pointed to Finland as a model that could be followed in such a transformation. Finland has a vibrant technologically-driven economy that is accompanied by an extensive welfare state. Therefore, as the Finnish economy indicates, there is no reason why America could not compensate for the loss of employment benefits and security by extending the social safety-net, despite the polemics put forth by neoliberals.

Argument

Taking from Castells, one can extrapolate a number of properties attributable to the organizational archetype that he refers to as the, "Social Network."

The epistemic nature of the network.

The epistemic qualities of the network are largely byproducts of its decentralized structure. The corporate hierarchy and centralization, in which information is commonly encoded and transferred according to "read and write privileges," restricts the flow of communications according to preconceived organizational planning. In open-systems, (Waterman, 1994), which are networked and largely deregulated, the communicative

limitations imposed by conventional information-management designs are negated; thus, facilitating the exchange of information among all of the nodes forming the organization. This allows for the unabated syntheses of existing knowledges that are distributed throughout the system into new knowledges that enable functions which engender previously undisclosed agential possibilities.

The diversity of the network.

Additionally, decentralization acts against the homogenization of the network. In a hierarchical corporate system – in which decisions are rendered by an executive capacity – the command structure can affect the organization in its totality. Conformity is conducive to mass culture, which can precipitate an intellectual morass, stifling social and technological inventiveness. In a decentered organization, with no hierarchy imposing doctrine, the social components are not subjected to homogenizing forces, leaving space for the emergence of knowledge generated from agents, whose actions are responsive to varying local contexts; thus, providing for the cultivation of manifold perspectives. Intellectual heterodoxy is crucial if knowledge is to be generated by the dialecticism occurring from the convergence of contrasting ideas.

Marketplace of social-action knowledge.

Of course, not all forms of knowledge are equal. Some conventions and practices are pragmatically superior, depending upon the circumstances in which the organization or components of the organization are situated and upon what objectives the collection, or sub-collection, of actors are attempting to accomplish. A decentralized dialogical condition fosters an open-system; a morphology in which communications flow uninhibitedly. Consequently, inter-communications among all the nodes in the network,

forming the organization, manifest a marketplace of alternative and sometimes competing best-practices; "recipes of knowledge" (Schutz, 1960) that can inform the successful enactment of various types of social-action. The fact that alternative conceptualizations and methodologies can disseminate throughout the network increases the likelihood that recipes for efficacious social-action will be selected according to their suitability for the contingencies arising from the local setting in which network agents are immersed, as opposed to decisions that are rendered from afar by an executive positioned on top of a corporate command structure, who is personally unfamiliar with the particularities belonging to the settings in which the work is performed.

Networks and adaptability.

Another significant attribute of networks, which is related to their propensity to generate social-action knowledge, is their adaptability. The extensions of the network are less inhibited from reacting to local contingencies. There-fore, networks can more easily reconfigure because their inner-relationships are less recalcitrant, allowing nodes to form new relationships with other nodes in the network, reflecting new environmental contingencies and new states of social-action knowledge. Consequently, networks can be more responsive to present circumstances, because they can adopt best practices on an *ad hoc* basis. They are not encumbered with standardized-operations that have been devised in a temporally distanced past; projections that potentially fail to anticipate the whole range of facts – what can amount to unaccounted for externalities – instantiated in future states-of-affairs.

Decentralization, integration, and smart-communities.

The Localism I espouse is not a luddite ideology. Although it might appear romanticist in the sense that it valorizes cultural institutions that had a more complete, robust expression in previous historical periods, it is by no means a call to reenact what has transpired. I recognize that digital communications have transformed human geography. The instantaneous transmissions of digitally encoded messages have, in certain respects, collapsed physical spaces. One can interact with a collaborator positioned on another continent with as much rapidity as one can exchange verbal cues with a colleague occupying an adjacent cubical.

Changes to mass communications have helped to usher in a new economy; what Castells refers to as "Informational Capitalism" (Castells, 2004). Economies and the commodities that they produce are no longer regional. Advances in distributive technologies have contributed to this condition. Additionally, however, the modes of production – while still built upon the industries required to harness the potentials of natural resources – which are central to this stage of capitalism, can now be characterized as generative of knowledge. Participation in the knowledge economy requires interconnectedness. Due to socioeconomic pressures, localities will be driven to adopt information management and communicative technologies that facilitate commerce and other forms of exchange with other local communities. In short, local populations will be compelled to construct and maintain a technological infrastructure that effectively renders them, "smart-communities" (Eger, 2002, p. 1).

The Internet – in its current level of diffusion – has already generated forums through which identities and interest groups have coalesced and communed; i.e., support

groups; hyper-localized communities; artists who have, in some instances, formed guilds; and political action committees. There is no reason not to suspect that this trend will continue as the Internet becomes even more integrated into our social practices and routines. In an inter-networked Localism, interlocutors can externalize experiences, using Internet-based forums, and build upon the intersections among their autobiographic narratives when they problematize identity: The characteristics that constitute the quintessence of the social standpoint that they will discover or reaffirm by interrelating their reflections, emotions, and concerns. Additionally, for those, who do not share a common history but are, nevertheless, drawn together as a result of a common social agenda, can interact in Internet virtualism and forge the relationships structuring the Social Movement Organization, which will channel their efforts and allocate their resources, as they collectively endeavor to achieve the teleology of their movements. Both of these processes will contribute to the integration of the manifold communities scattered across America.

When concretizing this abstract conceptualization, I compare the network's organizational properties to the features exhibited by a Hellenic league of city-states. The Greek poleis were physical territories that often possessed urban centers in which the local inhabitants converged for various purposes, not least of which involved participation in the political processes of the state. Additionally, as a result of military-economic interests, the poleis from time to time formed systems of alliance, or leagues, which were designed to leverage resources for the purposes of defense and imperial conquest. Therefore, similarly to the networking and inter-networking entailed by Localism, the relationships created by the league constituted a network of networks.

Networked social relationships.

Finally, Castells recognizes the criticality of the Internet and the kinds of communications it facilitates when accounting for the proliferation of networks in contemporary society. The Internet is generative of communications that embody a "distanced immediacy," between and among the interlocutors who communicate through devices that interface with the Internet:

Individuals interacting in the digital matrix experience relation-ships as intimate in the familiarity of address, the amount of information attainable about the other, the rapidity of response, and/or the involving nature of the interactivity (it is difficult to simply "be in one's presence" online). They experience relationships as distant through the interruptions of the communication media, the narrow channeling of non-verbal or extra-textual clues about states of thought and feeling, and the ease with which contact can be lost or terminated. This distanced intimacy additionally creates a sense that the actor is interacting with only portions of the other and that he or she is willingly or unwillingly selecting and presenting facets of the self instead of generalized impression (Dalton, 2004, p. 12).

It is the position taken in this paper that the "immediacy" and the "distance" instantiated during Internet communications make New Media ideal for the facilitation of successful sociopolitical movements. On one hand, Computer Mediated Communications can incite the affective bonds necessary for communalization, as the term, immediacy, suggests. On the other hand, the, "distanced," state of such communications allows one the space to discontinue an interaction in order to initiate different relationships with other actors constituting the nodes forming the network. Previous relationships among

nodes can be reformed under different circumstances in ways that reflect altered environmental conditions. The, "Distanced Immediacy," among the nodes in the network allows for inventive approaches to be developed by those who are positioned most proximately in relation to the situations in which such innovations are applicable.

Empirical Concretion of the Argument.

I have conducted ethnographic research on two American third-parties, the Green Party of the United States and the Populist Party of America. The comparison of these case studies illumines the following conclusion: It is not the mere presence of New Media that will determine the viability of third-parties in American politics. It is the ways in which New Media are adopted and integrated into the practices of third-parties that will be determinative. The decentralized mass communications fostered by the Internet should not be amalgamated into a form that is pre-structured by the conventional American-party corporate-organization. Rather, the morphology of the third-party should resemble the decentralized communicative infrastructure that the Internet permits.

Empirical Case Studies

When I initially set out to perform the research associated with this study, I had planned to conduct participant-observation upon a Midwestern state green party. Additionally, I conceived of my research design as Grounded Theory: An approach common to sociological ethnographies that strives to identify a pattern of social behavior, after which the researcher goes on to elucidate the recurring series of events, or social process. This form of analysis generates an empirically grounded theory, as opposed to theories produced from armchair speculation.

I realize conventional wisdom ordinary instructs one – when preparing for fieldwork – to peruse the ethnographic literature already devoted to the study of the cultural group. In spite of this, I decided not to form prejudices formed from readings of the preexisting literature prior to my own empirical observations. My access to the Green Party's internal affairs and their decision-making processes would largely determine what facets of the social activities I could reasonably access. As a result, what was disclosed during my observations depended upon contingencies that would be difficult to anticipate during the preparatory stages of the research. I felt that the possession of prejudices regarding what was significant would stifle my infiltration into the organization, because I would pursue corridors that were potentially inaccessible while passing by opportunities, which were accessible, that might lead to unanticipated disclosures that were, nevertheless, salient.

In order to infiltrate the Greens, I initially joined a county local in a Midwestern state party, which entailed obligatory membership in the state party. The first few weeks of my membership in the state and local organization consisted of email correspondences, because I was living in New York, at the time, where I attended graduate school. Despite geographical barriers, I found that I could participate in the party forums; at least those forums that were accessible to members of the party who failed to possess elevated statuses. The party leadership dominated the preponderance of dialog so much of my engagement was with the members comprising the leadership of the state party.

I made a point to peruse the topics members had posted on a daily basis. When I detected a thread that concerned policy or strategy, I would participate. Due to the time that I invested in these activities, I gained the recognition of at least one prominent Green

Party member, who lived in a neighboring state but audited, nevertheless, the state party I had joined. He began to contact me offering political advice on an intermittent basis. On one occasion, I recall posting an apology on the party forums, because I had delivered a strongly worded message. Soon after, he sent me an e-mail advising me never to apologize for anything. Instead, he said, "just move on." The point he was making was that apologizing merely prolonged the issue; consequently, illuminating the mishap so that it continued to remain in people's contemplations. It is better to introduce a new issue, rather than encouraging people to fixate on what has already gone wrong.

After I moved to back to the Midwest, I procured the position of bylaws chair. The party did not decide who would assume the position by a popular election. Instead, the executive committee members were responsible for nominating and ratifying who would become its incumbent. The chair of my local, who sat on the committee, had offered to nominate me, and I accepted. During the deliberations held prior to the vote for ratification, participants in the deliberations, who were already on the bylaws committee, voiced opposition to my candidacy. Apparently, I was the first person to be nominated for the position. Their opposition to my ratification was justified by their insistence that there was no purpose to having a chair to the bylaws committee because it had operated successfully without any such leadership. In my own private assessment, they were right.

My engagement in the organization was a tumultuous affair. I attribute many of my difficulties to the education I had received in sociology. In short, a Weberian ideology encumbered my interpretations, leading me to idealize the structure of the organization as though it were an ideal type analyzable as legitimate codes dictating

appropriate organizational processes. I recognize the fact that Weber subscribed to nominalist positivism. As an anti-realist, he did not grant ontological status to his posits, or ideal types. Rather, he considered these abstract constructs intellectual devices instrumental in the production of parsimonious analysis. I later concluded that collective behavior should not be reduced to ideal types. It leads one to make normative assumptions regarding legitimate versus illegitimate behavior.

This was not the end of my intellectual evolution when evaluating sociopolitical organizations. I had thought of successful social movements as forms of collective behavior that were organized according to a model that had some form of centralized decision-making or a hierarchical command structure. Perhaps, it would be fitting to refer to this deliberative engine as a *vanguard:* elites dominating a social movement. Over the course of my research, I abandoned this position in favor of a position insisting that organizations worked best when they are loose and networked, allowing them to quickly adapt and change, evolving to reflect the changing nature of the human ecology, in which they contend. The term, "adhocracy," was a neologism introduced in the 1970s (Waterman, 1992) to describe an organization that was not preformed according to rigid protocol. Rather, an adhocracy was an organization whose morphology was emergent in the sense that the organization structured itself on an *ad hoc* basis. In contemporary theoretical discussions, however, it is a closer approximation to describe my conceptualization as networked politics.

Social networks are not, of course, distinct to our times. However, with the proliferation of internet-based communicative technologies, they have assumed a pre-eminent significance in sociopolitical affairs. It was only a few years ago that the

Filipinos successfully dislodged an oppressive regime through a decentralized network that coordinated its insurgency through a "moblog:" A server that posts messages from wireless devices belonging to social participants assuming a form comparable to a mob (Knudsen, 2003). Even more striking, were the efforts of youths in Iran who attempted to sustain an election protest through social networking servers, such as Tweeter, which are structured similarly to a moblog.

I underwent another transition with respect to my theoretical perspective. After completing my research on the Green Party, I became involved in a new movement, which took radically different approaches toward the accomplishment of its sociopolitical agenda. The Populist Party of America was in the process of inventing itself, and the individuals involved in the project were of a completely different background than the preponderance of Green Party leaders. This group was comprised of Website designers and Search Engine Optimization specialists. It devoted the majority of its time to the innovation of new methods that could alter the social condition through the dissemination of electronic documents. The attentiveness to the new possibilities engendered by the Internet was a disposition markedly distinct from the practices of the Green Party.

The Green Party attempted to establish a viable presence by struggling to penetrate the core institutions that brokerage political power. The Green Party's efforts go into petition canvassing intended to acquire the number of signatures necessary for ballot access. If the party manages to hurdle restrictions to ballot entry, it will then face obstacles that are even more formidable. For instance, the party fails to attract the necessary media attention for its platform to be exposed to the electorate. Since the party appears inconsequential to journalists, it will remain obscure in terms of political

popularity. The Populist Party, on the other hand, does not attempt to work within an institutional configuration designed to prevent access to the inner-regions of government. The Populist Party, in short, works to extend its message through unconventional conduits provided by New Media. Elite institutions cannot be accessed in a playing field defined by those already in power. Rather, the network formed among old guard institutions must be combated through insurgent tactics that define the playing field rather than acquiescing to the orthodoxies instituted by those interested in thwarting popular insurgencies.

Critical Ethnography of a Midwestern State Green Party

In this chapter, I render the organizational practices of the state Green Party. These practices are discussed not from the perspective of organizational theory, but from the perspective of culture and its manifestation in organizational praxes. I attempt to construct a Green cosmology, into which I situate the party's practices when contextualizing them, in order to make them intelligible to the reader. In the following ethnographic accounts, I interpose analyses; sometimes comparing the Greens to larger discursive structures. Generally, I make the case that the Green worldview is immured in the same premises and implicit assumptions that structure other American political forms. These commonalities result in the same methodological prescriptions for political praxis. Therefore, to a significant degree, the Greens conform to the system that they are consciously working to alter.

This is not to say that the Greens do not possess an agenda that deviates from other political agencies. However, such differences in politics are constructed upon ideological consistencies that overwhelm the differences, eventually rendering them

inconsequential. By largely conforming to the processes of the political system that they seek to change, the Greens are disposed to become the very political structure that they reflexively focus on as the target demanding interdiction in an attempt to engender its alteration.

Short history.

The Green Party US, according to its own account of its historicity, was formed into a national political party in 1996 (Green Party US 2004 Party Platform). It was originally compiled from a convergence of state green parties that had existed, previously, independently from one another without any overarching national organization through which they could coordinate their projects and advocacies, (Hawkins, Ed., 2006). In addition to consolidating state Green Parties, the national Green Party affiliated itself, loosely, with other national Green Parties that had developed around the world; most notably in Germany. The organizations, preceding the Green Party U.S., and the relationships that they formed with one another constitute a rather complicated history. One theme that has been noted upon in the literature (Hawkins, Ed., 2006; Lucardie & Rihoux, 2008) is the authoritarian and undemocratic natures of many of these organizations and of the Green Party itself. The 2004 Convention highlighted the schism between the Green Party's rhetoric pertaining to its democratic reform agenda and its own internal decision-making practices.

The state Green Party, in which most of my observations took place, possessed no such formal history, at least at the time of my participatory observations. Verbal accounts were generally constructed according to the following narrative dimensions: The state party had existed in some nominal form, preceding the Nader Campaign of 2000, after

which Green political operatives, who were originally exogenous to the state, capitalized on Nader's popularity. They infiltrated the party and organized its local Green members. These interventions led to the establishment of the state Green Party in its modern form.

Green Party: literature and practice.

If one peruses the literature that has been rendered public by the Green Party over the years, he or she will find enunciations articulating democratic sentiments. The internal organization of the party, according to the literature, is intended to be radically democratized. When deciding on a policy affecting the party, the primary vehicle for the policy adoption is a consensus-building dialogue, in which all members of the organization were encouraged to participate. If a consensus could not be reached, certain procedures would close the debate in order for there to be a referendum.

If one is to reflect briefly upon the descriptions above, he or she will conclude that the decision-making processes, internal to Green organizations, embodied a bottom-to-top form of legitimization, resulting in the adoption of various policies. Accordingly, the most powerful and impacting segments of the organization were intended to be the general, undifferentiated membership, not an elected chair or an appointed steering committee. The Greens not only publicly articulated polemics in favor of grass-roots democracy; they assumed such a political organization in their own internal deliberations. At least, this is what the literature suggested.

Understanding how political values shape social behaviors requires the translation of the value's articulation into the form it takes on in concrete praxes: what amounts to the operational definitions. Otherwise, one might fail to interpret their semantic attributions in a mode that reflects the meanings with which they are endowed by the

people who use them. Therefore, when coming to understand the Green Party and its values, it is best to approach the endeavor by relying upon empirical observations of the actualization of such values in concrete practices.

In the state party in which I primarily based my participation, according to the bylaw structure of the organization, the membership had the ultimate power: the first and final voice in the decision-making conducted by the party. It was only following an attempt to arrive at consensus – through dialogic activities that included the membership of the party – that other mechanisms would be utilized, such as the closure of debate in order to vote on the measure that had been the subject of deliberation.

(At the time of my research, I understood my own ethnographic project as something that was primarily geared toward organizational theory; therefore I maneuvered my way as the chair of the bylaws committee. This position wielded little power, and it only required that the executive committee ratify the nominee who would become its incumbent. Therefore, it was not an officer position within the organizational schema of the party. I soon realized that my interpretations of the literature, including the bylaws, were divorced from party praxes. As I explain later, Green Party radical democracy has been co-opted by a managerial class that dominates the party affairs).

When I originally joined the state Green Party, the internal practices of the state Green Party failed to exhibit the behaviors and rituals that one would associate with a grass-roots democratic organization. Rather, the party had acquired a structure that allocated much of the decision-making authority to different committees that were charged with performing various functions for the party. Furthermore, there were elected officials, who held offices in the state Green Party. These capacities were, of course,

available to any member of the party, who could win an inner-party election. However, more times than not, the positions belonged to individuals who could be described as party bosses. This is not to say that they manipulated party processes in order to maintain power. Rather, their continuation as leaders within the party appeared to be more the product of deficits in confidence possessed by the rank and file members of the association.

Therefore, it would not be justified to assert that the grass-roots democracy that had been alluded to in party literature was necessarily corrupted and thwarted by a faction that desired to assume and persist as an elite ruling class. In fact, it is difficult for me to assuredly proffer the assertion that there was, at an earlier time, a collection of Green organizations that had, in fact, practiced grass-roots democracy. When working as a participant in the state party that I had infiltrated, I felt a tension: It seemed more practicable, efficient, to have a group of elites who could move the organization in beneficial directions, making the decisions. I would later come to realize that such a conceptualization was premised upon the principle that decision-making had to be centralized, as if an organization was a body that needed to have a mind. It was this "…Ghost in the Machine" that needed to be exercised (Ryle, 1949).

At the time, I had estimated the Green Party's lack of success as a result of party bosses who were not of an intellectual temperament necessary to conceive the plans that would lead to party success. The unannounced leader of the state party was certainly schooled in the art of party politics. He even had sufficient experience sitting on committees in the national organization for him to articulate bylaw modifications in legislator-speak: A combination of boilerplate with specificities, each instance of which is

designed to prevent against all the ambiguity-scenarios that had been institutionalized in the particular dialect of the language. He operated according to a philosophy that things had to be done, and the best way to go about accomplishing an agenda was to act in an authoritarian capacity.

Moreover, the party had installed what was termed a "coordinating committee," whose decision-making power preempted the other committees. The coordinating committee also selected, according to internal election, members of its body that would serve on its executive committee: The body charged with carrying out the day-to-day administrative work of the coordinating committee. Additionally, the executive committee was empowered to make decisions concerning the party governance. The preponderance of these decisions could eventually be reversed by the coordinating committee during one of its several meetings throughout the year. None of the coordinating committee members were elected through state party-wide election, but, rather, ascended to such positions through elections conducted by the party locals. As a result, coordinating committee officials were, in part, responsible for offering representation to the locals who had installed them into their coordinating committee seats.

American ideology of Pluralism.

The Greens are immured in the cultural-politico prejudices of what political scientists in the American Academe refer to as *Pluralism*: A collection of diverse groups with divergent interests that compete with one another in order to advance their agenda through public policy. No single group is completely dominant, and all groups have some impact upon the construction of public policy. It is the elites belonging to the respective

groups, who provide representativeness to their fellow members, with whom they share group interests (Manley, 1983). Therefore, the elites contest, collude, and negotiate with one another – interactions occurring within institutional corridors that are often left publicly opaque – in a collective orchestration of governance. During this affair these elites purportedly further the interests of the various identities that they embody. The people, who have little say in matters related to public policy, must trust that their interests are, indeed, advocated by the social elites with whom they share affiliations; identities whose members commune with varying degrees of solidarity, but all manage to elevate a capable few of their kind to positions of societal importance and influence, where they can impact public policy.

According to the mainstream of American political theory, this Pluralism is an advanced human condition. It is the result of the maturation of the American sociopolitical formation; the growth of a political system that is embodied by a society that has enlarged to dimensions in which it is no longer possible to conduct any form of direct democracy. Such an evolution is, in fact, a positive development, because democracy itself is paradoxically a vehicle for tyranny. The intellectual founder of Pluralism, James Madison, made the case in *The Federalist Papers* (2001): Democracy would inevitably entail the hegemony of a single faction that would come to control the political fixtures of a society. Only through geographical and social diversification, in addition to representative elites, who would intermediate conflicting interests by virtue of their moderating temperance, could any semblance of democracy be preserved. In order for democracy to be salvaged, it had to be compromised to its near paralysis. To quote Lenin, "It is true that liberty is precious – so precious that it must be rationed."

American democracy, if one is to treat history with deference, met its demise with the defeat of the anti-Federalists; an event that resulted in the ratification of the Constitution. As Dana Nelson (2008), makes clear in *Bad for Democracy: how the Presidency undermines the power of the People*, it is executive powers, which served as a catalyst effecting an evolutionary trajectory, that resulted in a departure of American social pockets and sociopolitical aggregates of varying expansion from their traditions of radical democracy. (This revisionist history has been told by others beside Nelson; most notably from my own perspective, a Professor from Lafayette College, Joshua Miller, who argued the impossibility of democracy apart from the social conditions associated with the colonial epoch in American history).

For purposes of this paper, the matter of salience to be extracted from these contrarian accounts can be expressed as follows. Interpretations of our sociopolitical conditions should not be premised upon the unsalable compound propositions: America is a democracy; or America possesses a democratic kernel that can be expanded and enhanced; or America is moving along a trajectory destined toward an ever-increasing democratic fulfillment. At one point in time, there was a democratic ethos that struggled for its preservation. However, the bands of democrats never organized or consolidated their resources in a manner that was even approachable to their adversary. American democracy was decimated by Federalism. The men and women contributing to the end of colonialism and monarchy had their revolution betrayed by a political faction propelled and shaped by manufacturing interests in addition to paternalistic dispositions.

America, from its inception as a constitutional republic, was propelled along a counterrevolutionary course that has incrementally edged toward the present state of

affairs: A contemporary state in which we find ourselves recovering from the Bush Presidency. Bush's sociopolitical ideology epitomized the counterrevolutionary authoritarianism that has consistently prevailed over the American people, who have struggled under many banners that have erupted and forced to the surface societal conflicts, winning successions from elites in different forms and varying degrees of ostentation; but who have ultimately failed to mobilize in any sustained and strategically effectual modality. These uprisings and revolts take on new significations – different from their conventional interpretations – when they are conceptually liberated from the prevailing ideology insisting that America is somehow, underneath it all, a democratic society; that America is destined toward betterment: the idealization of a good life defined as liberal and as democratic.

Pluralism is demonstrative of an interpretive pattern. According to the heuristics forming this type of thinking, sociopolitical accomplishments – victories on the part of the people – are integrated into the overarching narrative often termed as, "Whiggish history." In this framework, their values are compounded and multiplied, due to the analytical forging of interrelations among them, making each historical event appear more salient because it is conceptually supported by other incidents that are defined as ancillary, as if each incident contributes to its successors. This is the deceptive mechanism at work within the rhetoric: Things are always improving; or they have improved; or they are destined to improve. If we view these events independently, however, their values are drastically adjusted. For instance, the People's Party, which was the culmination of the American Agrarian Revolt, was a fleeting movement. The various farmer alliances disintegrated organizationally. The only historical generalization to be

inferred from the populist movement is the sociopolitical function assumed by the Democratic Party, which has always operated as a flood channel taking in streams of mobilization during periods of popular discontent. The Democratic Party then redirects radical elements back into the countervailing superficial tensions forming the stasis of the two-party system.

Of course, under Whiggish pretenses, The People's Party gave fuel to what would become the Reform Era of the early 20th century; or what can be roughly conflated with the Progressive Movement; what we are told to have consisted of social reforms, demanding compliance by plutocrats and freeing the resources necessary for the beginnings of a social welfare infrastructure. In spite of Whiggishness, there is a different story to be told; one that detaches the Progressive Era from its conventional positioning within a continuum where it is preceded by Populism and followed by the New Deal. Progressive ranks were filled with eugenicists and Platonic proto-fascists, who took it upon themselves to deconstruct the vestiges of local political autonomy that had been the possession of the people. This Localism often translated into systems of patronage, providing uniquely devised forms of social welfare. The local autonomy could assume the form of customs and rituals through which people policed themselves and resolved their own conflicts through their own indigenous juridical institutions and arrangements. Progressivism was not an emancipation of people from the tyranny of wealth and their own inwardness; it was the expansion of a centralized system of governance; the consolidation of power by a growing locus of authority. In this respect, Progressives were socio-politically disposed in a fashion akin to the Federalists.

Perhaps, Progressivism does bare relation to the New Deal: A time when Mussolini was popularly perceived and often the positive reference in the discussions undertaken among governing elites. Indeed, Roosevelt, at the time of his inauguration, was largely expected to swell executive powers to the point that Congress would be pushed to political impotency. Legislation would be established through presidential edict, as opposed to the parliamentary procedures organizing the congressional bodies (Goldberg, 2007). In terms of the successors to Franklin Roosevelt, this elitist ideology became the "Mandarin Syndrome," whose symptoms were particularly pronounced, according to Chomsky (2005), in the Harvard-exclusive Kennedy Administration.

To lodge another wedge in the master-narrative we have been conditioned to internalize and actualize as the interpretive lens through which we filter events, nothing is more prescient than what social trends and prospects presently loom. After all of the supposedly interconnected advancements, our current sociopolitical condition can, nevertheless, be characterized by its gross and advancing schism – a divide between the institutions responsible for the construction of social policies and the deliberative involvement of the people. To frame this trend in rhetorically positive terminology, the Whig would insist that society has entered into a state where power is allocated according to expertise and technocratic competency. The distribution of labor has advanced to the point where our social relationships are so complex that they can only be managed by a group of professionals; a ruling class fashioned not with gold but with the status symbols afforded from modern research universities and think-tanks; what Daniel Bell, (1973), referenced as technocracy. Technocracy is premised upon the same assumption that acts

as the foundation for Pluralism: Elites are inherently disposed to provide representativeness to the groups with whom they affiliate.

Intellectual adherence to a prevailing theory was put into interesting terms by the philosopher, Lakatos (1984). He termed the tenets of the belief system as core principles. They are infallible, providing a consistent framework within which one can tinker and adjust corollaries and subsidiaries in an ongoing attempt to account for inconsistencies between theory and empirical observation. The core, however, apart from occasions where there are reports of particularly pronounced empirical anomalies, will remain unchallenged, as though it is unconscious, and it will continue to provide bedrock upon which scientific refinement can be erected. It is the notion of representativeness that is lodged as the core underneath Pluralist Thought.

Pluralism and Green ideology.

The Green ideology resides within this overarching pattern of interpretation. Green members rarely express conceptualizations that transcend Pluralism and representativeness. Rather than an alternative intellectual framework, under which an actor can apprehend normatively appropriate political process in qualitative contrast to what predominates, the Greens seem merely content upon tinkering within the parameters established by American Pluralism. It is the submission to the logic and processes of Pluralism that amounts to the paradoxical existence of the Greens. They endeavor to become that which they are defined in opposition. The state party, of which I was a member, was, perhaps, more conservative than the New York or the California Green parties, but its practices were aligned to near conformity with the normative system organizing the powers that they desired to challenge. It always appeared as though they

were in vocal protest while remaining in implicit endorsement. Campaign reform would be sought through the device of campaigning, and the reforms were predicated upon the ultimate preservation of the campaign process.

This matter has a practical dimension as well. The Greens are, de facto, consenting to institutional processes that have been established for the purposes of allowing social groups such as the Greens to exist, but these groups never possess enough chips to effectively wait out one, or for that matter, consecutive hands at the seven-card-draw. Resources are expended attempting to gain entry on ballots. If a slot on the ballot is obtained, then there are sparse resources remaining to apply toward actual campaigning. One exception was the state party boss. He was well versed in mechanics of state politics. However, his political outfit had little chance of ever winning the state representative position to which he electorally aspired. He amassed the support necessary to gain automatic entry on the ballot; something acquiring approximately 6% of the vote. However, his district encompassed a large university from which he drew student support.

Politics 1.0: Pluralism and the political economy**.** The expression, "Politics 1.0," is intended to designate instances of political activity that embody precepts and habits underlying the political culture endemic to contemporary America. This sociopolitical epoch exhibits, as its core feature, a mass consumerist 'democratic' ethic: The citizen is conceived as a consumer, who is presented with selections during the electoral process, for whom the citizen can cast a vote; an act analogous to the selection and purchase of a product brand by a consumer. This framework for democratic participation mirrors the logic underlying the free-market. Individuals and collectives can initiate political

projects, leveraging whatever resources they have accessible, which are then used to market the political package to the voting public.

Although this is beginning to change as a result of Internet diffusion, political messages, which circulate throughout society, are distributed according to the dynamics organizing broadcast. Broadcasting entails an asymmetrical structure dictating the flow of communications. The few can speak to the many, but the many are left incommunicado, unable to utilize broadcasting to disseminate their own messages. Instead, the overwhelming majority of the public, when participating in politics, find themselves limited to a singular form of expression: A speech-act referred to as the vote, whereby members of the public can express favor for specific politicians and the policies they champion.

Pluralists would argue that in addition to elected officials there are multiplicities of NGOs, which advance the interests of the various sections differentiating members of the population. American political scientists consider these groups to be a crucial component of a functioning "democratic" nation-state because the expertise that these groups amass, in the policy arenas in which they specialize, provide valuable knowledge repositories that can be drawn from during the construction of legislation. Depending upon the political capital that a special interest group accumulates, it can expect to be a participant in the negotiations that are waged by congressional members working to arrive at compromises that can attract the support necessary for the bill's passage.

Pluralism, broadcast, and Internet communications**.** There are a number of factors contributing to the institutionalization of the asymmetry structuring American mass media. The most notable antecedent to this condition is the technology itself. Messages

formatted for broadcast are restrictively expensive to generate. In the case of television, an agent needs to purchase airtime from a station; not to mention the expenses associated with the actual production of the message to be broadcast. One cannot bypass the networks monopolizing television, because the 'publicly' owned finite broadcasting spectrum is enclosed, excluding those not furnished with the necessary FCC credentials. (This, of course, has changed with the establishment of cable and satellite television. Nevertheless, an actor must still purchase airtime from cable networks).

This is not to argue technological determinism. Rather, this feature is referenced in order to illumine a condition that Pluralism – in its defense of Politics 1.0 – has failed to acknowledge in any substantive way. Nevertheless, whether implicitly or rudimentarily articulated, it bolstered Pluralism's credence because it made it seem inevitable. This is the reason for the new boogeyman, "cyberpopulism" (Netanel, 2000) – a new ideological antagonist, largely the conceptual creation of Pluralists. In short, to maintain the sociopolitical order, Politics 1.0, Pluralism has been forced to adapt its rhetoric in order to address the contingencies presented by the Internet and its decentralized means for communication. A byproduct of this rhetoric is an accusation leveled against cyberpopulists for neglecting to account for the beneficial roles performed by the deliberative legislative bodies in addition to the NGOs, both of which contribute to American Pluralism. This complaint is tied to the criticism that cyberpopulism overestimates the abilities of ordinary citizens to parse through the gluttony of information made available by the Internet when the masses try to make sense out of public issues. Pursuant to this claim, Pluralists contend that there is a need for

intermediaries, such as NGOs, to stand between flows of information, stemming from governmental activity, and the citizenry.

Suppressing the Internet's democratic possibilities. The Internet, most saliently, is dynamic in both content and form. It should not be conceptualized as simply another medium for communication, but, instead, as a de-centered apparatus in which media converge (Jenkins, 2006). This is an important feature because it allows for the inexpensive generation of contents in addition to their inexpensive distribution. The message can be distributed to endpoints, consisting of interlocutors interfacing with different digital technologies. This allows for the easy disbursement of messages to a mass audience; members of whom might be connected with one another through the availability of divergent technological constructs that can render the same messages, albeit according to varying formatting; whether it is, for instance, an e-book, a website, or an audio book.

Media convergence provides convenience for the end-user, who desires to become a content creator, because he or she can propagate a message, sending it to his or her counterparts comprising his or her social networking, relatively effortlessly and without the prohibitive consumption of resources. This is because the different media are reducible to digital binary. Programming languages, in their most primitive form, all consist of machine code: 1's and 0's. (These are significant qualities because they help to precipitate social events, most notably of which involves viral marketing: A form of advertising that relies upon end-users to further distribute the message to multiple counterparts in social networks; consequently, proliferating the message exponentially).

Broadcasting, in contrast, does not facilitate media convergence. Therefore, it is more difficult to propagate a message by converting it to multiple formats. Analogue, as a means for multi-stream publication, not only degrades quality, it is tedious. This results from the work of translating the contents from one medium to another; a task that must be achieved in the absence of a common language that can be reduced from different forms of analogue transmissions. Since all digital media share binary coding as the basis upon which their higher-order linguistic constructs are assembled, they can be encoded from one digital language to another through precisely duplicable algorithmic models. This results in an inexpensive, expedited conversion, making the act of publication accessible to masses.

While it is not difficult to argue that broadcasting is nearly exclusively dominated by elites, there have been and are minimal exceptions. The Public Sphere Theory belonging to the study of mass media has had some marginal affect upon the regulations imposed upon the private interests controlling broadcasting. Such regulations have reserved pockets of airtime to members of the public. For instance, on occasion, a local news broadcast might allow a citizen to present op-ed commentary. This accommodation, however, is diminutive. Furthermore, during the era of neoliberal deregulation, whatever quasi-Habermasian policies that had been put into effect, regulating broadcast, were left to fallow.

Dissident voices. Other discourses have produced alternative conceptualizations of democracy. One such competitor to liberal democracy – whose contrast with liberalism is particularly pronounced – prescribes a political ordering that operates with a kernel consisting of consensus-building deliberations that are achieved through public dialogue.

Habermas, who is probably the most recognizable figure to advocate a radical democratic theory that enumerates such qualities, contradicting many of the premises underlying Liberal democracy and, for that matter, Pluralism, maintains that all members of society possess the intellectual faculties required to engage in rational deliberations over public policy.

Habermas proffers a definition of rationality that departs quite significantly from conventional understandings of the concept. According to Habermas, rationality is not a system of thought demonstrable in the cognitions belonging to monadic agents. Rather, it is a form of sociability that is structured according to basic interactive principles that Habermas enunciates; i.e., the distribution of publicity must be egalitarian, allowing for all members of the public to coequally address their counterparts. Therefore, rational contributions are not contingent upon individual faculties. That is, it is not a matter so much of making sure that the best people are making decisions; instead, it is the social conditions under which the dialogue is committed that determines the legitimacy of the decisions that are arrived at by the political public.

Unlike the scenario associated with the politics depicted by Habermas, Pluralism does not provision for the participation of the citizenry during the formative processes out of which public policy is forged. This is not to say that theorists, such as Rawls[5], who maintained a commitment to Kant's notion of Practical Reasoning (Kant, 2008), did not incorporate into their models an insistence upon a forum for public debate over pertinent social issues; a type of intellectual stimulation that would aid citizens in making informed choices when voting, so that their selections for a candidate would be based upon a more

informed and lucid understanding of the voter's interests as well as which candidate would better advocate those interests.

Rawls' argument, however, is deceptive. He masks his underlying elitism with Practical Reasoning. But to note, there continues to be a schism between governance and the people. Kant's system of deliberateness entailed directness. Rawls, instead, deferred to elected officials. It is in respect to this elitism that Rawls is connectible to Pluralism. Therefore, the democratic model proposed by Rawls and many of his 20th century contemporaries embodied the consumerist ethic: The people vote for the best packaged-politic available on the ballot.

Green Party's Internet use.

Despite the availability of Habermas as a dissident voice, the Greens that I observed do not consider this model to be a viable option. It might find representation in some Green literature, but the practices and practical decision-making undertaken by the Greens does not conform to this alternative conceptualization of political praxis. What is striking about the Green failure to embrace a deliberative and direct democracy in their internal praxes is that the instruments to overcome practicable obstructions are right in front of them. It is the Internet and its possibilities for facilitating existential change that the Greens have failed to seize upon in a substantive way. The Greens have Internet forums in which they conduct some business, but the forums are modeled according to a schema that manifests the same hierarchical corporate organization that we see in other forms of polity. For instance, the state Greens have their equivalent to a steering committee – what they refer to as a coordinating committee – embodying a managerial class that dominates the internal affairs of the organization.

Furthermore, the existence of a managerial class controlling the organizational practices of the Greens is evidenced by the presence of the forum administrator. The administrator is equipped with a variety of read and writes delegations. Therefore, the administrator can selectively extend permissions to various members of the forum, thus limiting who can post topic starters or responses to topics that have already been published. It should also be noted that the members of the forum – even those with no elevated status – can activate or deactivate various features, specifying the way in which the he or she interfaces with the forum. One can select, for instance, whether to receive e-mail notifications every time a message is posted. However, if the end-user does not want to be bombarded with automated e-mails that are sent after every posting, he or she can elect to receive a bulk e-mail once daily, or once weekly. Further, the forum end-user can typically select the personal information that he or she will make available to other members of the forum. However, the forum administrator can limit the available specificities that can be tailored by the end-user.

Subgroups within the forum can be created, and the membership of such divisions can be further restricted by the administrator. The generation of such subgroups was essential for the establishment of an online venue that could model the actual organization of the party. Committees that comprise the Green Party can use sub-forums in order to transact their business. The state Greens did have a forum in which the general membership of the party could participate. The forum consisted of two subdivisions; one of which was designated for any announcements that were related to events and affairs not directly associated with the party, itself; the other of which involved a representational space intended for postings directly related to party affairs.

In addition to these two spaces in which any member of the party can participate, through posting topics and responses to the contents published by other participants, there were sub-forums intended to facilitate communications among members of committees. These spaces were often restricted to individuals who had specified statuses within the party. For instance, the coordinating committee forum was limited to coordinating committee members, officers of the party, and the bylaws chair. Only those with special privileges could access the postings and responses deposited by the coordinating committee members during the course of their internal deliberations. In other words, the contents of the forums were intentionally left opaque to the preponderance of the party membership. According to my assessment, this practice was instituted in order to permit the coordinating committee members to better manage the impression that they projected to the rank and file of the organization.

Committee practices**.** For the most part, the rules of conducted, organizing each committee's internal interactions, were not formally encoded. They were not inscribed into the bylaws belonging to the organization. Rather, they qualified as standing rules. Therefore, they were positioned at the bottom of an analytical hierarchy determining which organizational codes supersede other codes. For instance, if an organization possesses a charter – which serves as a constitution – and has further specified its procedures by constructing bylaws, the principles embedded in the constitution would supersede in authority the rules enacted in the form of bylaw legislation. Extending this logic to the next step, the standing rules can only exist as long as they do not contradict the higher order principles, which are expressed in the bylaws or in a constitution, prescribing appropriate organizational conduct.

Therefore state party bylaws, to extrapolate from preceding descriptions, conform to an information type architecture that embodies a centralized, hierarchical systemization into which the information types are integrated and interrelated. It is this organizational design that informs individuals and committees as to how they should structure their interplay. The decisions affecting the organization are almost entirely rendered by the coordinating committee or the executive committee. In fact, each of the lower-level committees are required to possess at least one coordinating committee member, so that the he or she can directly observe the lower-level committee practices and ensure that it is correctly carrying out the commands that are issued to it by the executive committee or the coordinating committee.

The Green Party describes itself as an organization that self-governs through the practice of grass-roots democracy: a form of reckoning that endows the basic membership of the party with the authority to directly and preemptively legislate. However, in practice, this authority is rarely invoked. This is due, partially, to the fact that the membership of the party only convenes once or twice a year during party conventions. And, according to the constitutional structure of the party, it is only during these physical convergences that bylaws can be modified.

Apart from these annual or semiannual events, the party organization lacks a forum in which the membership can assemble in person, in order for it to perform the dialogic processes through which it enacts legislation. This has practical failings. Greens cannot organizationally adapt as quickly as necessary, and contingencies are not effectively managed or advantageously exploited. At one point, I suggested that the party engage entirely in civic advocacy and patronage. An example would be the establishment

of credit cooperatives and consumer unions that could leverage and effectively negotiate with the interests forming the supply side. However, the management of the party was disinclined, and direct legislation was impractical, due to the logistical problems associated with the organization of party conventions.

As compensatory for the inability to legislate rapidly, coordinating and executive committee members in the party were not strongly beholden to the bylaws. The party boss, for instance, to whom I have already made reference, served as the chair of the party. He additionally assumed other elevated statuses with the party, such as Internet moderator: a position that was never actually provisioned in the bylaws. When moderating the Internet forums, his decisions often possessed legislative entailments, declaring what speech was permissible versus speech that should be sanctioned. Such decisions were based upon principles that were never legislatively enacted according to the appropriate processes: legislative adjustments to the bylaws, in theory, were only to be enacted by the party membership.

Summary of the Green Party.

The Green Party conceives of itself according to an organizational architecture that resembles the traditional configuration of corporate-structure belonging to the Old Economy and its business model. This form of social organization is premised upon the following principle: In order for collective behavior to function in a way that is coherent and purposeful, it must be centralized so that an executive can coordinate the activities of all of the organization's constituent parts. We can conflate the executive of an organization with the central nervous system of an organism: It is this system-command-and-control that manages all of the components that collectively constitute the organism.

It is the deliberativeness of the system-command that formulates the plans through which projects are attempted and – under felicitous circumstances – brought to a completion. Additionally, it is endowed with a corrective function, the system-control, which reacts to processional breakdowns in order to realign the system's parts, reestablishing sequences of events, or processes, collectively constituting the system.

The order of things. When attempting to come to terms with the Green Party's inclination to emulate the very sociopolitical organizations that it was striving to displace, I asked members whether it was strategically sound to attempt, "…to beat them at their own game." By this, I was questioning whether it was wise to organize and coordinate collective behaviors in a modality that paralleled the two national parties in addition to whether it was even fruitful to compete in the state's electoral system. In respect to the former of the two sub-queries, I was implying that Green Party's status as an insurgent might necessitate the use of untraditional political methods in order to overcome the hurdles that were referenced in the latter sub-query. One must be mindful of the fact that the state electoral systems are structured by statutes instituted by Democratic and Republican controlled legislatures. The two national parties have restricted ballot access in states in order to consolidated powers and push third-parties to the margins. The latter sub-query implied that it might be more advantageous to attempt to enact social reforms through activities in civil society that were not directly political. At one point, I proposed that the party should attempt to create a credit union as well as a consumer union; the former of which could operate as a financial cooperative; the latter of which could collectively bargain for health insurance. These extensions of the party organization could be used as a means by which to attract more people to the party by offering material

incentives. Nonetheless, neither of my suggestions was taken seriously. In response, one member stated that the state Green Party was a political organization and should engage in electoral politics. If people were interested in the advocacies that I suggested, they should join other non-political organizations such as the Sierra Club.

Populist Party of America Ethnography

In this section, I will make the case that although executive capacities appear, *prima facie*, more rational due to the integration of their constituent parts under a single command-structure, it is the decentralized and horizontal method of making decisions that produces the better outcome for an aggregate. In order to demonstrate my point, I will describe the organizational methods that were employed by Populist America: A sociopolitical movement that was highly decentralized and in many respects horizontally organized. The analysis of this organization will demonstrate that the party more effectively achieved its agenda of gaining publicity for the electronic documents expressing its political philosophy through an organizational strategy that deliberatively left its internal composition unstructured and de-centered. This was an amorphous embodiment whose constituent parts were networked along horizontal dimensions, allowing for decisions to be made on *ad hoc* bases among members who voluntarily associated in localized contexts.

When assuming this form of organization, reactions to environmental contingencies could be more responsive to the particularities of the specific situation. Additionally, the decentralized, lateral model of social organization allowed members, who were networked with one another through organizational devices – such as newsletters, blogging, and commenting, article publication, and emailing among

participants – to freely associate with one another in order to initiate projects in which they could locally determine the roles and levels of participation that they assumed. Depending upon the successes and commotion generated by an initiative, other members, and new members could be attracted to the micro-enterprise. This could invigorate the local initiative so that it could grow to the point that it had systemic consequences. In other words, the initiative and the particular methods that it cultivated in order to accomplish its ends could be organizationally transformative by inspiring other initiatives; thus, influencing the culture of the internetwork.

As a generality, the heuristics inferable from a successful initiative must inform without becoming doctrinaire, so that Localism is not compromised. This sociability embodies a non-geographic Localism. It grants significant autonomy to each instance of its manifestation in the form of *ad hoc*, contextualized decision-making that is conducted among freely associated individuals. It countervails entropy and the social disintegration that might ensue by virtue of the integrative functions, forms of Social Media, which are facilitated by the cybernetics of the Internet; thus, staving off in the dissolution of the organization: an internetwork comparable to a league of city-states.

Background to Populist America.

The Populist Party's name is somewhat deceptive. One might mistakenly think that this emergent political party is a modern incarnation of the original People's Party. The Populist Party of America, however, possesses values and heuristics diverging from the norms that underlay America's first self-acknowledged populist movement. For instance, Populist America is far more libertarian and would never submit to a condition in which government would become the owner of firms situated in the spaces structured

by the institutional economy: The encoded legalisms dictating the types of relationships that actors can assume with one another during their participation in the economy. On the other hand, the People's Party of the 19th century advocated the nationalization of the railroading industry and of the banking industry (Goodwyn, 1978). Therefore, the Populist Party of America should not be conflated with the advocacies of the 19th century Agrarian Revolt and some of its socialist tendencies.

This is not to say, however, that there are no commonalities. Both the Populist Party of America and the People's Party conceptualized their political advocacies as advancing the interests of common citizens; a section whose political voice becomes muffled and suppressed by chattering factions in society. The People's Party saw its antagonist as the *moneyed interests*: Those who manipulated currencies and its paper notes in order to extract profits from the ventures and enterprises of those who actually contributed to economic productivity. This is the preeminent thematic property that structured "producerism:" A discourse that segregated the agents acting in the economy according to the binary, "producers" versus "parasites."

The Populist Party of America, alternatively, directs its opposition against corporatism, making no distinction between moneyed interests and other corporations, because both are perceived as having a disproportionate influence upon public policy and its administration in American society. This does not mean that the Populist Party of America is anti-capitalistic or even anti-corporate. Although there was some discussion of abolishing the institution, the corporation, in order to make owners more responsible for the actions of the businesses that they own. The Populist Party of America does not want to nationalize industry; rather it wants the markets in which corporations are

situated to be competitive. This would require the decoupling of corporations and the state, and the abandonment of the current economic form, corporatism, in favor of markets that are actually free and competitive. To sum, if there is an overarching theme uniting the People's Party with the Populist Party of America, it consists of their similar conceptualization of the political field in terms of *elites and masses*.

History of Populist America. The Populist Party of America was incepted during 2002 in the Los Angeles area. It was initiated by a former member of the Green Party, Helen Schmidt, and a libertarian, Mike Boldin; both of whom felt alienated from the current political establishment. When I became aware of the Populist Party of America, it was in its infancy, existing only as a website with a sparse registry of geographically disconnected individuals who had subscribed to a biweekly newsletter or had paid the required fee to become a member.[1]

Boldin was technologically inclined and managed to achieve some publicity through the art of website design and Search Engine Optimization, (SEO): The optimization of websites and their webpages in order to achieve higher placements in the results of search-engines when they are queried using various keywords and phrases, for which the website has been optimized. Additionally, Boldin had accumulated enough contributors, authoring materials, for him to publish a steady stream of new and updated contents. These factors precipitated relatively high Search Engine Results Placements, (SERPs): An attribute generative of link referrals from search-engines because end-users tend to follow the top results and rarely follow results placed beyond the third page produced by the search-engine. I cite these aspects of the early party existence because they sketch out the setting in which the party development unfolded. From its

germination, the Populist Party of America was incubated in the virtualism of Web spaces. There was sparse, minimal embodied activism that was conducted in Los Angeles. However, from my understanding, these affairs never resulted in appreciable party growth. The preponderance of efforts consisted of propagating the Party's platform via the representation obtainable from the Internet and the World Wide Web, (Web).

Populist America sociopolitical ideology.

It is a leap of faith to surmise that there is such a thing as a party ideology in the context of America history. American party structures came to envelop multiple sections without necessarily integrating the diverse groups into unifying systemizations of political belief and interpretation, (Ladd, 1981). Nevertheless, some scholars, such as John Gerring, (1998), after performing content analyses of campaign rhetoric have concluded that on a national level the two major parties can be interpreted as possessing unifying ideologies, despite their internal sectional conflicts. Furthermore, American politics are rife with extra-democratic institutions – political parties are exemplary – which exert pressures, such as party-line voting, upon politicians who compromise their representativeness when capitulating to the demands of their party leadership.

The Populist Party of America is comparatively minute in size when juxtaposed with the corporatist parties, constituting nothing greater than what is frequently referenced as a "micro-party." Therefore, one would suspect that Populist American would possess a mechanical solidarity; and, subsequently, a significant degree of ideological homogeneity. In short, it would possess the characteristics enumerated by Gerring without exhibiting the sectionalism described by Ladd. Such a portrait, however, departs from empirical reality. There are of course thematic congruencies, offering some

unity to the individual perspectives forming Populist America. However, these commonalities cannot be stenciled in a surface affording a permanent impression. They are not steadfast rules or principles that have been operationalized and institutionalized.

I was initially attracted to the group's loosely constructed agenda: A programme for sociopolitical transformation that came to be encapsulated under the term, Localism. According to Boldin, the Populist Party of America's political philosophy can be summed accordingly:

> […] you're right on track. Here's the key statement: "decentralization is seen as a device to empower local political structures in which citizens have expanded influence due to the diminished size and proximity in which they attempt to effect public policy decision-making outcomes. "
>
> Through decentralization, people have a voice. Otherwise, each person is lost in a wilderness, and our only hope is through group rights, group lobbying, and the like – and the interests and rights of the person get more and more diminished over time.
>
> Here's another thought. The Libertarian party, for example, would want libertarianism throughout the country, and would exercise all power necessary to prevent socialism from arising anywhere. On the other hand, a Socialist Party in power would ensure socialism nationwide around the country – and prevent libertarianism from arising anywhere too. The same goes for the corporatist parties – pursuing their own interests and keeping out other political ideologies.
>
> Alternatively, though, Populist Party philosophy would allow all these ideologies to flourish, if people wanted them to. If Vermont wants to be [M]marxist, then let them. If New Hampshire wants to be libertarian, let them. etc[.], etc[.], etc. If a structure such as

this actually existed, it would be much more unlikely that tyranny would reign supreme. And, if it did in any one area, at least it would be limited in size and scope – in comparison to what we have now….where a single tyrant like Bush can drive the entire nation down the drain.

One thing that's important, is that we're not going to sacrifice principle in order to join the system more closely, like the Greens seem to be doing. It would be better for the party to die, than give up or compromise its goals. This is something that will eventually be added in writing to some charter docs….but more on that later. […]

Decentralization and Localism. In contemporary political thought, Localism – a form of social organization that is fostered through the decentralization of political power in society – is embodied to some extent by the Green and the Libertarian platforms. Libertarians object to internationalism and its constraining impact upon the sovereignty of the democratic nation-state. This logic extends to the American federal government. Accordingly, Libertarians desire to transform the federal government so that it is as small as possible, only assuming a size large enough for it to provide what states cannot reasonably produce and manage on individual bases, such as a military defense. For this reason, Libertarians emphasize the 9th and 10th amendments of the Constitution, which protect state and individual rights from incursions committed by the federal government.

Nonetheless, their Localism is compromised. They insist upon individual property rights and the free-market as overarching, organizing principles structuring all American social relationships. Obviously, such doctrinaire commitment to Classical Liberalism is at odds with the autonomies of local communities, which might have

developed indigenous values irreconcilable with the normative regime imposed by the imposition of Liberalism.

This is not to suggest that Libertarians would compromise their commitment to electoral democracy. Liberalism, on the other hand, in its classical form, was apprehensive of democracy, because such political mechanisms could result in the erosion of property rights. Nevertheless, Libertarians continue to propagate core tenets of Classical Liberal ideology. Only, individualism and property rights are asserted as constitutional fixtures, not as natural laws. Consequently, by imposing Liberal values, such as the norms structuring the Anglo-American institution of private property, Libertarians constrict the abilities of local communities to self-regulate the behaviors of their own inhabitants.

Greens call for the decentralization of federal powers. This statement can entail various significations. Most apparently, decentralization is often translated into electoral reforms, such as the implementation of proportional voting; a measure intended to ensure greater representation to minority identities. Such a proposal, presumably, would decentralize polity, because more perspectives would be accounted for in the representative bodies forming government; subsequently, mitigating the effects entailed by hegemonies formed from majority identities[2]. This aspect of the Green ideology is indicative of their commitment to the typified values of the New-left. Proportional voting is a mechanism conducive to the conditions fostered under a politic that is structured to provide minority identities some influence; thus, expanding the ontology of Liberalism, which only predicates rights and obligations upon the individual in society.

I have come across writings in blogs where Greens have attempted to conceptualize the New-left. Some have argued that the Green Party is a manifestation of the interwoven memberships to historically marginalized social identities, which collectively constitute the social meta-movement, the New-left. The arguments they make in support of their conclusion lack soundness. However, if one were to assume the role of a surrogate, an argument could be fabricated: The social networking existing among members of the New-left facilitates the formation of coalitions. These groups have separate agenda. However, on occasion, their interests converge on a policy issue; thus inciting those to mobilize only to the extent that they remain preoccupied in tactical deliberations surrounding the specific issue around which they have coalesced. Therefore, proponents of the New-left claim that it is a programme for activism that stifles the establishment of doctrinism. Supposedly, coalitional politics never result in the institutionalization of any of the agenda embraced by particular blocs forming concentrations within the New-left internetwork.

The Green charter is arguably a generator of coalitional politics. This document is exceptional due to its brevity, only enumerating 10 abstract values consented upon by all Greens. Additionally, these values are not concretized in operational definitions, so their boundaries and entailments are intentionally left fuzzy; a condition that allows for heterogeneity among the members of the party. Therefore, the Greens manifest the same networked type of morphology that is ascribable to the New-left. Therein, lays the intellectual justification for the insistence that there is continuity between the New-left and the Green Party.

This might be an appealing scenario, but it does not accurately represent empirical reality. As I tried to demonstrate in the previous chapter, the Greens are immured in the ideology of Pluralism; a cultural condition fostering a social organization that institutionalizes political strata: elites and masses. This division is engrained in the processes through which public policy is generated. The elites are overwhelmingly empowered with the right to determine policy while the masses – with exception to extraordinary occasions – are not. Additionally, the Greens embrace an economic market model called, "Community Economics" – A system of reciprocity supposedly allowing for increased diversity on the supply-side of the economy. In other words, the tendency of free-markets to enter into stages of industrial consolidation – during which an oligopoly emerges, exacerbating the standardization of productive processes – will be prevented through regulatory apparatuses; thus, ensuring more heterogeneity among producers.

Although the Green philosophy, *prima facie*, is more appealing than the Liberalism propagated in the discourse emanating from Libertarians; it is imperious in temperament, just the same. This intrusiveness basically conforms to the following model: The Greens neglect to account for the fact that the installment of values such as "Ecological Wisdom," requires increased federal interdictions in the affairs of local populations. Green communitarian philosophy advocates universally applicable regulations intended to prohibit environmental destruction. It might well be desirable to enact and enforce environmental legislation. However, it would be a policy instituted and imposed upon all those falling within the stretches of the federal government and it would leave little room for difference and diversity. The regulations that the Greens would

enact in pursuit of diversification [3] would ironically entail the homogenization of the population under a regime that is intended to promote diversity.[4]

The Populist Party of America proffered the notion of Localism in order to resolve some of the contradictions embodied by both the Greens and the Libertarians. According to the Populist Party of America philosophy, Localism amounts to greater personal and group freedoms because of the diversification of geographic and placeless-cybernetic environments, providing individuals with more forms of life from which to choose. This governing fosters a condition assuming more of a confederated morphology than America's current state of politic; what is referenced with the expression, "federalism."

Localism should not be conflated with "communitarian democracy" (Gabardi, 2001); nor should it be confused with Liberal individualism. However, there is a nuanced relationship among the concepts consisting of both contrasts and congruencies. As an individual, one will not be encumbered by positive obligations. This condition, in which negative rights prevail, is valorized by Liberalism. Indeed, Liberalism only eases its embrace of negative rights in so far as it prescribes negative duties that are designed to preserve the negative rights of others. In other words, one is not to be molested, and, in reciprocal fashion, one must demonstrate the same restraint when dealing with counterparts. Interwoven into this Liberal conception of individualism is an Anglo tradition of property, which is as an extension of the individual. Therefore, damage to property is tantamount to harm to a person or incorporation: a legal construct that acquires some of the significations attributed to personhood.

Localism is a negotiated outcome between Liberal individualism and communitarian group values. Its emphasis upon decentralization is intended to dismantle political structures; thus, reducing undesirable obligations that might be instituted and imposed under the auspices of political relationships. Whether they are "bureaucrats," fueled by bio-energy surplus, who "molest madmen," or autocrats who authoritatively display their sovereignty, they will have their political abilities compromised under Localism. This disavowing of cosmopolitanism will ensure socio-cultural space for other political forms to materialize. However, Localism, unlike Liberalism, does not entail the adoption of individualism by all localized polities. On local levels, people can choose to prioritize their group identities as opposed to their statuses as individuals. Under this condition, people can live and form communal relationships. In this respect, Localism serves as a political anti-trust promoting a competitive political marketplace that is free of consolidation. Localism, therefore, attempts to ensure that political fixtures are as minimized as possible while maintaining a national polity, so that both Liberalism and communitarianism can coexist.

Objections to Localism. There is an immediate objection to be raised against the conceptualization of Localism and the decentralization of political powers that Localism entails. The protest can be paraphrased as follows: Such a political model naively assumes power to be concentrated under a central authority, such as a monarch. Foucault has demonstrated that the monarch has been "decapitated," enacting a condition where power is no longer centralized; but, instead, assumes a capillary form, flowing throughout all extremities of society, pervading all aspects of life in Modernity. It is through the subterranean political operations conducted by the Truth-makers in civil society that the

American people are disciplined according to a behavioral regime, rendering them compliant to the demands emanating from the modes of production and consumption.

These sub-political disciplinarians – i.e., social workers, grade school teachers, guidance counselors; all of the auxiliary professions attached to criminal justice; and all of the practitioners belonging to the medical-industrial-complex, who problematize deviancy as symptomatic of pathology – manufacture the subjectivities of the population. They are in the business of industrializing bodies, shaping and programming them to serve as contributors to the American systemization of life. The bodies are disposed to seek pleasures incited from the incidents intertwined with the life-processes defined by the system: An organization of social relationships manifesting domination, marginalization, and subjugation; all of which are operations of power, according to Foucault.

According to Populist America, in contravention to the subterranean political structures that pervade the nation-state, federal programs will be fractured, if not demolished. Nationalized education would be dismantled, along with the entailing ideological homogeneity that it cultivates among the youth who are subjected to the standards of its curriculum. Local enclaves would be free to emphasize histories constructed from narratives stemming from their unique standpoint within the American experience. All of the quasi-political apparatuses intruding into the spaces of civil society – translucent, extra-democratic instruments of governmentality – will be decentralized along state and provincial boundaries. Professional societies will no longer be empowered by the statutes stipulated by centralized government. The American Medical Association, to cite a single example, will no longer exist as a state legitimized cartel.

Municipalities will usurp power from larger, less immediate political establishments, protecting provincialism from the imperiousness of sociopolitical movements disguising themselves as universalistic; i.e., cultural conservatism and Progressivism.

Of course, a student of American history will astutely point out that nearly every liberty; every correction of systemic injustice has been the product of Federal intervention. Indeed, the 10th Amendment of the Constitution has been the legal recourse of bigots and racial supremacists. State's Rights have been a rhetorical device legitimizing the continuation of sociopolitical conventions and formalities that marginalize and sometimes terrorize minorities in provincial affairs. In response to this problem, Mike Boldin has often said, "You can vote with your feet." What he means is that as long as indigenous cultures are extended the flexibility needed for them, not only to participate with other sections falling under the American State, but so they can express themselves through their own sociopolitical constructs, there will be enough social difference in order for one to integrate into a form of life that is appealing.

Governmentality of Populist America.

The ideology of Populist America underscores its approach toward organizational management. The party gave greater emphasis to the diversification of its constituent parts than it gave to establishment of codified bylaws or the institutionalization of democratic processes for the adoption of organizational policies. As Castells (1989), has noted, in order to take advantage of the new mode of production, "Informationalism," centralized control must be abandoned in favor of decentralized exchanges of information, allowing for new syntheses to emerge from the processes of exchange that are conducted by actors who possess diverse perspectives and insights. The Populist

Party realized that it was unproductive to turn inward and exhaust energies reflecting upon itself and its own organizational composition. I would suggest that such activity results, not in innovation, but in demobilization and stasis.

This is not to suggest that problems internal to the organization did not present themselves. However, I am insisting that the party formed an adhocracy, which was better prepared to deal with contingencies as opposed procedures devised in advance. An adhocracy can attend to the contingencies of the particular situation while institutionalized regulatory mechanisms, on the other hand, must be created in anticipation to situations that are conjectured or hypothetical. This conclusion relates back to the Information-technology-inspired governing principle stating that the deployment of virtual agencies is preferable to bureaucratic structural alterations that entail organizational legacies. It also relates to Castells', (1998), understanding of the Network Society and its ability to reorganize its relationships into new configurations in order for society to keep pace with rapidly changing economic conditions.

Therefore, the concept, adhocracy, which was introduced by Robert Waterman (1990) is intended to designate more than just business ventures. I have converted it so that its' extension encompasses all instances of decentralized organizations: A social collectivity that fails to possess an internal central-engine responsible for decision-making and delegation of responsibilities and powers. Organizations, such as the indigenous American Apaches, certainly possessed structure. However, there was no formal executive capacity, acting as either a leader or implementer. Participation in tribal initiatives was voluntary, not obligatory. Furthermore, initiatives could be publicly articulated at local levels of the tribal organization. Consequently, despite the capture of

an influential tribal member, the Apaches could continue to organize and reorganize, assuming forms that were responsive to the demands placed upon it by the particular situation (Brafman & Beckstorm, 2006).

Leadership**.** It is true that Mike Boldin had the ability to control many of the party processes due to his authority over party finances and the PopulistAmerica.com website. However, in as much as I could observe, he never imposed his will over others in the context of party activities. It was Boldin's charisma and affability that made him a successful organizer. In this respect, he was a leader. However, there is a difference between an authoritarian or a demagogue and the function that was performed by Boldin. The former rules by the Ancient Greek understanding of hubris – the disposition causing one to insistently attempt to undermine the honor of counterparts by issuing public humiliations (Robinson, 2004). Boldin, contrastingly, guided the party through persuasive speech and reasoning; genuine efforts at compromise or, at times, reconciliation; and by appealing to the intellectual capacities of others, not to their emotive whims or fears of reprisal.

(The distinction that I am making is different from the one made by Thucydides (Robinson, 2004), who drew the following demarcation: A statesman, who is led by a group, such as Cleon during the Peloponnesian War, is a demagogue, according to the Greek military historian. On the other hand, a statesman, who directs an assembly, such as Pericles, is a leader. Boldin assumed both of these roles in that he was influenced by the organization just as much as it was influenced by him. Perhaps, it is better to refer to Boldin as a statesman who served the role of a coordinator: someone who facilitates.)

Additionally, in contradiction to conventional expectations, Boldin's flexibility and willingness to let others initiate projects did not fracture the organization but, instead, facilitated party integration. His style of coordination encouraged members to contact other members in order to conceive and undertake projects on an *ad hoc* basis. If members detected that they had something in common, a determination that could be made from a member's electronically published articles or comments that a member had posted in forums, they could discuss their shared perspective and use it as a launching pad from which to devise a project intended to contribute to the party's growth. This decentralization allowed the organization to leverage its intellectual resources because it encouraged networking. Further, through the continual construction of virtual agencies formed in response to human ecological contingencies, the party's networked, amorphous organization never suffered institutionalization or stasis, which could stifle ingenuity. Thus, new strategies and techniques were always being formulated and implemented.

Localized Initiatives. These experiments often consisted of launching new websites or attempting to relate to people in new ways using existing sites. PopulistAmerica.com, for instance, underwent a series of structural evolutions. One major leap consisted of the site transitioning from entirely static WebPages to a platform with an installed weblog, in which new contents were streamed upon a dynamic webpage. This certainly had the effect of simplifying the workflow process. Additionally, it increased linkages among written articles that were published by the party on PopulistAmerica.com. WordPress blogging platforms provide programming components that can automate the presentation of links, which appear in the weblog's side panel, directing the end-user to other related articles on the blog. In addition to the

interrelations and ensuring integration of published contents, the accoutrement of a weblog helped to facilitate a more interactive medium because readers were invited to comment on the materials they had read. Particular posts would attract numerous comments from interested readers. The comments were often constructed in reference to one another, which lead to threads of dialog embodying debates over points contained in the article or auxiliary comments ancillary to the posts thesis.

Human ecology and the culture of Populist America.

Aristotle wrote, "Democracy arises out of the notion that those who are equal in any respect are equal in all respects; because men are equally free, they claim to be absolutely equal," (Aristotle, 2008). It should be stated that the organizational archetype embodied by Populist America was dramatically different from the homeostasis formed from an egalitarian social structure. In order to illumine the difference a historical comparison is helpful.

There was a bipolarity formed between Ionian Hellenic culture and Dorian (Peloponnesian) Hellenic culture (Ober, 1996). The Athenians were extroverted, engaging, and inventive. The Spartans were introverted and reacted slowly. The Spartans preferred to fight on land where strength, discipline, and bullheadedness were the heuristics informing the execution of successful battles and campaigns. The Athenians preferred to fight in triremes on water, where there was greater space for strategic and tactical innovation (Hale, 2009). The phalanx, on the other hand, did not allow space for such innovation, due to its defensive posture, in which a man's shield was responsible for guarding the man on his left. As a consequence of this defense, to break with the tight formation of the phalanx was to expose one's colleague to likely

impalement. The phalanx required disciplined steadfastness by all of the individuals comprising it, who would collectively constitute an undifferentiated mass. Indeed, prior to a campaign, the Spartan wife would hand her husband his shield and remind him not to return home without it, because such an absence upon his return would indicate that he broke ranks and neglected to support his comrades (Ober, 1996).

According to Hale (2009) the major contributing factor to the dynamism of Athenian society, which stood in contrast to the stagnation of the Spartans, was the fact that it was a maritime empire as opposed to one that was landlocked. Hale used the sea as a metaphor for democracy. It allowed for discovery and it provided space for innovation. The freedom that the sea afforded represented the dynamism of Athenian classical society. Further, it was the Athenian use of the trireme that facilitated a democratic social order. Even the poorest elements of Athenian citizenry could staff the trireme. Because political participation was predicated upon military service, the trireme provided ideological justification for the political enfranchisement of all Athenian citizens, despite their lack of wealth. In fact, the slaves recruited to staff the triremes during a moment of crisis in the Peloponnesian War were subsequently granted citizenship.

The Athenians conducted nautical maneuvers exceeding in complexity and sophistication the tactics of their Persian adversaries, whose fleets assumed straight lines in the waters (Hale, 2009). These Athenian tactics often consisted of stratagems designed to lure enemy triremes into vulnerable positions, after which they would be rammed by the bronze tip of an Athenian vessel. In fact, as the Athenians demonstrated by their maritime battles during the Persian War, they could use nimbleness, agility, and ploys to

defeat considerably larger enemy formations. One more interesting aspect belonging to Athenian society was that the rowers aboard the vessels could openly talk back and debated with their generals. In fact, if a general failed to hear his boisterous Athenian compatriots quarrel with his decision-making, he might suspect an impending mutiny (Hale, 2009).

Dissimilarly to the landlocked metropolises belonging to antiquity, the sea promoted exchange of goods and ideas. Furthermore, the Athenians did not occupy those whom they had conquered – rather, they forced them into alliances that entailed annual tribute to Athens, which the Athenians would use their triremes to collect (Hale, 2009). Spartans, who live on land, alternatively, evolved into a state of perpetual military preparedness. The military regime organizing Spartan society came about as a reaction to their enslavement of an indigenous population, the Helots: A Hellenic ethnicity whose status was one akin to serfdom (Ober, 1996). They were owned by the Spartan state and bounded to the manors owned by their Spartan masters. In possession of the furious Hellenic inclination to assert independence, the Helots were prone to revolt. Therefore, the Spartans had to maintain continuous vigilance over the Helots, oftentimes terrorizing them in order to dissuade them from attempting to free themselves from bondage. As a consequence, the Spartans looked inward attempting to preserve and consolidate their wealth, which was generated from the productive capacities of enslaved Helenians.

The Athenians, alternatively, looked outward; a disposition related to their mastery of the sea, (Hale, 2009). In fact, the democratic city-state was atypically cosmopolitan. The Athenians allowed *Metics*, who used Athens as a base from which to conduct trade, to build their own temples to their alien gods within the city walls and

even in proximity to epicenters of sacred geography, such as the acropolis. *Metics* were not only tolerated, if they had skills that were economically profitable, they were recruited and encouraged to migrate to Attica. Unlike the xenophobic Spartans, who did not permit *Metics* to remain permanently in their city, the Athenians were not suspicious of new ideas or alternative modes of Being-in-the-World. These temperaments contributed to the Golden Age of Athens: a period of time when Athens was bustling with intellectual and artistic activity; both of which were demonstrative of classical Athenian dynamism.

The Sea as a metaphor for Cyberspace**.** The Internet and the Web as communicative media also reinforce creative impulses. New programming languages are constantly being forged and refined. These newly devised languages enable extra possibilities and provide foundations for subsequent programmers to innovate. Additionally, cyberspace is inhabited, in a virtual respect, by actors whose engagements assist in perpetuating what I have alluded to as the "hacking culture" (Castells, 2004). This expression designates an ethic that encourages creativity and intellectual transgression. This ethos is pagan in character, due to the impassioned endeavors that contributors to this form of life undertake along with the whimsicality with which such hackers approach their formidable corporate adversaries, such as Microsoft.

Pagan hackers move from project to project, often dismantling the securities integrated into proprietary software packages. The Pirate Party of Sweden, for example, is a manifestation of this ideology (Piratpartiet, 1983). They denounce Intellectual Property laws, (IP), because such restrictions stifle the advancement of Internet technologies: its physical expansion, its programming, and its socio-cultural possibilities.

Akin to the sea, it is the openness of the Internet – the unrestricted flow of cognition and the cultural manifestations according to which thought is shaped, which leaves these intellectual products free to pollinate other forms of thinking – that results in its inventive vitality.

Choosing cyberspace as optimal terrain for insurgence. Boldin and other members realized that it was the vibrancy of the Internet that afforded the most promising prospects for building a sociopolitical movement. Therefore, they placed a premium on learning how to use it most effectively. Following the initial emergence and social circulation of the Web 2.0 paradigm, Boldin started to experiment with Web services that aggregated contents that were submitted by end-users. (As mentioned, a salient example of this type of Web platform is the popular Digg.com). Boldin developed techniques to submit the contents of the PopulistAmerica.com website effectively, so that they would have the greatest likelihood of ascending to positions of popularity and visibility. He knew at what times during the day to submit, and he became perceptive at tagging, or labeling, the contents so that they would garner attention. In fact, from my own observations, I have found innumerable back-links to the PopulistAmerica.com website from news aggregations.

In order to increase the circulation of PopulistAmerica.com references within Social Media, the pages populating the Populist America domain possess embedded graphics that are *hot-slices*: Images that can be clicked upon in order for the browser to jump to another Web address; or, images that when clicked bring up a form that the end-user can effortlessly fill out and submit to Web 2.0 services. Therefore, in addition to the submissions entered by PopulistAmerica.com editors, many of the references to

PopulistAmerica.com are created by the end-users who visit and circumspect the Populist Party website electing to submit the pages to aggregators. To use an example, by having multiple users submitting to the Digg.com service, the contents belonging to the website receive additional votes, which cause the aggregator to prioritize the referenced site's placement on its display of contents.

Web 2.0. When the term, Web 2.0, was first introduced, I remember proffering a distinctively incorrect definition of it to other members of Populist America. I had thought it referred to *Google Cache*, which was recording every transaction that occurs on the Net. I was under the impression from reading erroneous literature that Google was building an Internet on top of the existing Internet – an Internet 2.0, so to speak – that would process requests more rapidly since the Internet in its totality would be emulated in a massive cache, allowing Google to deliver WebPages more responsively than the ordinary process involving a DNS that resolves requests by sending the browser directly to the address of the server that is in possession of the desired directory. I negatively interpreted this because I thought it was a breach of privacy and I continue to maintain that *Google Cache* is a violation of Fair Use, since Google preserves on its servers and renders available to the public WebPages in their entirety; a duplication of contents that certainly is not protected under Fair Use. Therefore, even if an individual takes something off the server upon which he has posted it, Google continues to make the contents retrievable to anyone savvy enough to access its service, *Google Cache*.

However, as I became more familiar with the concept, I learned that it was used to indicate uses of the Web that encourage collaboration among the end-users of Web services. It would be a disservice to the reader if I attempted to reduce "Web 2.0" to a

single meaning, because the concept has manifold uses that fail to conform to an essentialist definition. In fact, it is testimony to the rapidly evolving state of Web technologies that instances of Web 2.0 are continuously being fashioned with new attributes and functionality. Therefore, it is better to understand Web 2.0 as a family-resemblance, where the instances of Web 2.0 have similarities, but no all-pervading congruency. In order to extrapolate an operational understanding of Web 2.0, it is advantageous to examine an exemplar of Web 2.0 in some depth. From this analysis, I intend to illumine a cluster of *topoi* that tend to be expressed by Web 2.0 constructs.

The most salient exemplar of Web 2.0 is the *Wikipedia*, or the "People's Encyclopedia." It is a reference resource that is generated by a community of online contributors who constitute a decentralized organization. Anybody can contribute to the leaderless project, and, by extension, any agent can edit and annotate the *Wikipedia's* contents due to the absence of a hierarchical editorial workflow process that might, if installed, delegate such privileges to specific individuals and agencies. Therefore, by its very nature, the *Wikipedia* is an ongoing social event that organizes without leadership or command. Despite the absence of centralized decision-making, conventions have solidified dictating the normative interactions among the participants and failure to conform to such protocol can incite reprimands from other contributors to the continuing enterprise.

These norms extend to delineate the criteria that need to be met in order for descriptions of a referenced subject to be accepted by other members of the community, who always have the option of editing the contents that have been posted. Therefore, the contributors have formed a consensus regarding the epistemological principles that

determine what contents possess veracity. This epistemology is best described as a variant of objectivism. Contents are interpreted as credible as long as they reference or cite accepted, authoritative sources. Other than reference and citation, there are no methodological procedures to be followed that could serve as justificatory evidence indicating that the renderings are, indeed, accurate depictions of reality. Therefore, veracity is based upon correspondence with objective reality and has little to do with methodology.

An epistemology of objectivism is compatible with the decentralized organization formed from the community of interlocutors contributing to the expansion and enhancement of the *Wikipedia*. Unlike peer review, the *Wikipedia* does not require its contributors to commit to processes during the authoring and editing of materials intended to contribute to the project; institutionalized ritualism that acts as a legitimating device. In other words, there is no set of methodological procedures – what collectively constitute the peer review process – which, if followed, provide justificatory support for the descriptions and analyses rendered in a researcher's published work. Therefore, the *Wikipedia* reliance upon objectivism is a necessity due to the publication's decentralized authoring and editorial workflows, which disallow the adoption of a more conventional justification epistemology.

To condense from descriptions above, Web 2.0 is a dynamic medium that enables social interaction among a group of interlocutors. This interaction extends beyond the mere exchanges between an author and his or her readers. Rather, there is the possibility for an ongoing exchange of ideas expressed through dialog flowing in manifold

directions; albeit all of the communications are mediated by the structure of the Web 2.0 service, which creates certain parameters constricting the actions of the participants.

Another *topos* is the democratic tendencies embodied by Web 2.0 instances. The Wiki is an exemplary model of deliberative direct democracy. Its decentralized authoring and editing allows for egalitarian participation so decisions are formed according to a model of consensus, not by any social authority. According to a study performed by *Nature*, (Giles, 2005) the *Wikipedia* workflow process results in contents that are only marginally more erroneous than traditional reference works. In addition to the findings reported by *Nature*, the contents published by the *Wikipedia* far exceed in volume and topics the materials offered by a traditional reference resource, such as *Britannica*. On a final note, the errata instantiated by the *Wikipedia* are identified and corrected with more rapidity than traditional reference works; i.e., *Britannica*. This is mostly due to the decentralized editorial process possessed by the *Wikipedia*, which allows any member to correct any mistakes that he or she identifies on an *ad hoc* basis. Therefore, there is no need to publish a new edition, which involves recreating the events comprising the peer review process, in order to revise erroneous materials contained in the most recently published volumes.

Additionally, since the contributing members come from a diversity of social standpoints and backgrounds, the contents of the *Wikipedia* are subjected to examination by agents, who reflect more perspectives. *Britannica*, contrastingly, limits authorship to academic professionals who specialize in disciplines specifically related to each article's subject matter. Since in the case of *Britannica*, it relies upon the circumspection performed by individuals in possession of the same educational and professional

experiences, the scope of knowledge implemented in the review of contents is narrower. Consequently, due to the lack of manifold intellectual perspectives, errata that have been recognized by disciplines not specifically related to the article subject will go undetected.

Because of these considerations, the enumeration of *topoi* should be amended to include the following property: Web 2.0 instantiations can be more efficient and prolific producers of knowledge than systems that instantiate a hierarchical and centralized mode of decision-making. This conclusion is supported by research that has been performed in the area of business management (Waterman, 1994). As opposed to hierarchy and authority, business organizations are more productive if they are "open systems:" A state of affairs in which the most important task for management is to adopt a standoffish posture, in order to allow employees, who have more intimate knowledge pertaining to the jobs that they performed, to develop their own best practices (Waterman, 1994).

This entails a working environment in which members can communicate with one another concerning their tasks and ideas for improving the way in which they execute these tasks when interacting with counterparts in the organization. Workers are encouraged to conduct frequent meetings in order to discuss their responsibilities so that they conceive better ways with which to manage and coordinate their activities in an effort to enhance efficiency. Under these conditions, workers are more productive, and they are more satisfied and less frustrated, because they feel as though they have control over the nature of their employment, (Waterman, 1994). In other words, workers are not alienated from the manufacturing processes to which they contribute.

Evolution of Populist America.

Previously, it was mentioned that Populist America was an inventive community; one where new ideas where constantly being conceived and implemented in an effort to exploit the possibilities of the Web. If one peruses the Web and searches for Populist America's website, he or she will not find it. Mike Boldin, who owned the domain, decided to discontinue the site. I had anticipated Mike's decision because it had appeared that he had been devoting increasing time and energies to an outgrowth of Populist America – a site that was related to the 10th Amendment of the Constitution.

Such a topic had relevancy to the party's philosophy – a system of political thought that was premised largely upon Localism; a political programme that entails, to a certain extent, implications that are similar to the interpretable consequences stemming from the 9th and the 10th Amendments of the Constitution, which protect individual and state rights from the encroachment of federal powers. Boldin had asked me if I wanted to assist on the project. However, I knew that political discourse that was associated with the 10th Amendment was frequently the rhetorical recourse of right-wing politicians. Since I already realized the type support it would generate, I was reticent to offer more than a few words of encouragement.

The TenthAmendmentCenter.com obviously struck a never with the American public. It has been growing in size since its inception, now possessing numerous locals as well as a number of affiliations with other prominent organizations. Boldin has transferred many of the writings once published in PopulistAmerica.com to the TenthAmendmentCenter.com domain. His experiment has proven to be a success;

consequently, transforming Populist America along a new course with more profound possibilities.

Case Studies Conclusions

Extrapolating from the above descriptions, it is my contention that political organizations will benefit from adopting configurations that constitute open-systems. This increases the affective bond between the grass-roots support and the advocacies taken up by the political organization. The dismantling of the barriers preventing the regular members from participating in the formulation of policy will create the impression, among the grass-roots elements, that their work is not only generative of party intellectual products, such as the platform, but also endowed with aspects of their peculiar penchants as agential beings. They will feel as though the party-related construct is a partial manifestation of their own uniqueness, or character, because they have been actively and intimately involved in the creative fashioning of that which they endeavor to produce. This stands in considerable contrast to the alienation experienced by an agent who is constrained to act only as a cog in the party machinery.

I once received a bulk email from the Democratic Party, stating in bold font that the intent behind the email was to implore grass-roots participation among the email's recipients. However, as I started to read the message in its entirety, it became apparent that it was only soliciting donations to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Apart from donating money, there was no invitation to participate in the inner-decision-making functions of the party. This type of solicitation is demonstrative of Politics 1.0. The people, from whom politicians attempt to foster support, are conceived as consumers. They are, subsequently, alienated from the processes that are formative of

governance. Their opinions are not solicited, unless through the depersonalizing battery of questions to which they might be subjected, periodically, during instances of polling. However, simply answering preconceived questions, reflecting concerns that might have little to do with the lives and pressures experienced by the respondents, only serve to alienate the Plebe from the operations of polity and governance. He is, again, the consumer, the selector of brands, and all too often, the products on the market only have superficial differences among them.

As mass consumers in late capitalism, we are told that we enjoy a plenitude of choices from which to select when purchasing commodities. However, it is difficult to understand how 10 to 20 different brands of cereal, all of which are corn based with additive corn syrup, actually constitute qualitatively distinct choices. Considering the lack of qualitative diversity among the candidates who percolate to the top of the two-party system, the choices that we are presented are superficial, offering unsubstantial reforms, certainly not radical change to the current system of inequalities and exploitations.

The Constitution never provisioned for political parties. Nevertheless, they have come to dominate and define the electoral systems of the states and the politics of the federal government. This consolidation of power has resulted in the diminution of electoral choices. Candidates, in order to achieve electoral success, must modify their rhetoric through which they depict their sociopolitical ideologies so that they are in conformity with the political mainstream. Failure to homogenize one's ideology with the prevailing prejudices possessed by the chattering class will attract public ridicule and result in political marginalization.

To use an analogy, supermarkets are claimed to epitomize the abundance of choices available to the American consumer, who benefits from society's free-market capitalism. However, upon closer inspection, it is problematical grasping the benefits ensuing from a selection of products that offer little substantive difference in terms of their composition. One who consumes cereal is faced with choosing between "Frankenberry" and "Count Chocula." The diversity that is referenced when praising American free-markets mainly points to alternative marketing schemes, which suggest differences that in reality are miniscule. Additionally, the proliferation of free-markets – along with the advances in production and distribution that free-market capitalism encourages – has had a devastating impact upon the diversity of livestock and agricultural commodities.

Furthermore, these open-systems should be decentralized, in order to leverage the intellectual resources available to the organization. Such a move would abandon the prototypical corporate structure embodied by the preponderance of political parties – whether they are mainstream parties, third-parties, or even micro-parties. Alternatively, the knowledge upon which decisions are based would be generated through a system of distributed collaboration: A de-centered, networked morphology that facilitates intercommunications between and among all the nodes comprising the organization. When decisions affecting the entire organization had to be made deference would be extended to the, "wisdom of the crowd," as opposed to an executive or an oligarchic committee. The former draws upon the collective intelligence of the entire social body. The latter relies upon the judgment of a *managerial class*; what is conceived in terms of a *central nervous system*, providing executive functionality, without which it is largely

believed the organization would cease to exist as an agency. However, as I have attempted to demonstrate through the comparison of the Green Party, the Populist Party of America, in addition to the Tenth Amendment Center, into which Populist America evolved, centralization inhibits the creative potentials of an organization, preventing it from innovating forms of social-action knowledge that are tailored to the unique circumstances in which the actors constituting the appendages to the organization are engaged.

Internet-use and Patterns of Civic Activity

The representational spaces engendered by the Internet are, in many respects, a political equalizer. They are affordably accessible, allowing even marginalized groups to publicize their advocacies. This relatively egalitarian nature, however, is not merely a byproduct of the Internet's technological capacities. Certainly, the Internet can provide an infrastructure for decentralized communications. However, if integrated into different social practices – shaped by alternative values and norms, giving rise to divergent political economic institutions – the behavioral patterns associated with Internet-use could assume a divergent morphological state.

Political Economy and Net Neutrality

The current nature of Internet communications is contingent upon the preservation of Net Neutrality: Regulations restricting Internet Service Providers, (ISPs), from favoring or disfavoring the contents produced by Internet services offered by Web content providers. Even more, Net Neutrality prevents ISPs from creating tiered services in which the media generated by some Web content providers would be given priority over other media created by alternative content providers. Therefore, ISPs cannot construct a

stratified system of content distribution, which they could use in order to prioritize contents that they have a commercial interest in promoting. The basic intent of Net Neutrality consists of ensuring the free-flow of information throughout the Internet, so that all the contents of the Web are widely accessible to large portions of the population. The free-flow of information, which has been enabled by Net Neutrality, has resulted in the development of several Internet-based knowledges that are accessible to the public.

Programming on the Web.

Website programming is certainly an emergent profession, whereby trained and skilled individuals are sought by NGOs and commercial interests for purposes of constructing websites and ensuring that the site possesses the desired functionality. However, despite the presence of this growing profession, the competencies necessary for effective Web programming do not appear to be undergoing a transformation through which they will be consolidated and professionally monopolized. Web programming can be complex and exhausting to understand. However, unlike knowledge that is monopolized by professionals, the tools needed to acquire an adequate understanding are transparent and accessible. The interesting quality of the Web is that it is an autodidactic breeding ground. The Web is filled with discussion forums dedicated to various types of programming in which professionals and non-professionals interact and exchange insights and offer one another suggested resolutions to enunciated problems. Additionally, the "hacking culture" and its continued presence are evidential of the Web's autodidactic dispositions. The anti-privatization culture – sometimes referred to as "Pirate Culture" – which endeavors to maintain and recapture the Web as an interactive space embodying the normative principles associated with the Gift Economy, (Yan, 2005),

cultivates sophisticated programming knowledges that can be utilized for the purpose of cracking proprietary software distributions.

The hacking culture values the transparency of software programming, so that applications can be hacked and modified in order to enhance or specify the program's functionalities. The EU, in fact, requires the release of application source coding as a matter of anti-trust enforcement. The anti-privatization movement is, perhaps, best exemplified by the Creative Commons, (2008): An alternative to the provisions enacted under Fair Use, determining the appropriate conventions to follow when replicating Intellectual Property. The use of the intellectual construct, whose subsequent use is stipulated by a Creative Commons License, is typically only restricted by the inheritance of a limitation that is declared with the expression, "Share and share alike," (Creative Commons, 2010). The precise composition of a CC license can vary. It can stipulate the absence of any protections. In contrast, the license can allow for additional provisions, such as restrictions enacted against the further reproduction of the intellectual product. However, such additional limitations – up to the point that the CC License functions equivalently to Fair Use – are not the norm because they supplant the properties that actually make the Creative Commons distinctive and purposeful.

Search-engines and Publicity.

The practices of major search-engine providers – i.e., Google and MSN – have contributed to the egalitarian character of the World Wide Web. Google, for instance, claims to provide "objective" rankings of relevancy when returning results for the queries entered into the Application Programming Interfaces, (APIs), of their Web services. Although, one can certainly question the veracity of such a contention – on the grounds

that search-engine results are the product of the designer's prejudices when determining what algorithmic functions are demonstrative of relevancy – this statement, proffered by Google, continues to retain saliency. "Objectivity," in the context of Google's practices, should be understood as the declarative of an ethic, which guides the decisions made by the search-engine vendor as it enters into the processes of research and development, through which it continually refines its approach toward the organization and presentation of the World's digitized information. Search Engine Result Placements, SERPs, cannot be purchased. Instead, the acquisition of highly placed rankings is the result of the quality, authority, and popularity of content that is published upon Web-based platforms. These properties are indicated, in part, by the link-authority[1] of the "back-links" directed toward the WebPages whose relevancy is being determined. Link-authority refers to the prestige and content relevancy of the text in which a website's back-links are embedded. As Google's algorithm became more complex, its appraisal of these relationships, assuming the form of links, became increasingly esoteric and, for-all-practical-purposes, impossible to an outsider decipher. Google has devised a series of interrelated analyses in order to evaluate the worth of the back-links, estimating the weight with which they should be attributed when indexing a site's contents and assessing it's the relevancies of its pages to possible phrases that might be queried by end-users.

All of these considerations, which guide Google and other major vendors as they continue to index the informational contents deposited on the Internet, are oriented toward providing the a useful service to end-users, who are the population from whom vendors generate their resources. The revenue is derived through a process that involves the billing of firms, who have purchased pay-per-click advertising; expenses that are

determined by the click-through frequencies of end-users, who might find interest in one of the clearly labeled advertisements displayed upon the WebPages, which are placed in the content margins and marked, sometimes, with a different color. Google has built an empire from its *Adsense:* Its pay-per-click advertising service. The technologies that Google is in the business of developing – algorithms that return the most relevant contents possible – is, additionally, applicable to the delivery of *Adsense* advertisements. Target marketing is concerned with contextualizing the delivery of advertisement contents to which the end-user is presumed to have an interest. Therefore, *Adsense* – similarly to search-results – is a function primarily concerned with delivering relevant contents based upon contextual cues. Therefore, the development of Google's search-engine goes hand in hand with the pursuit of the technologies underlying its marketing services. Astonishingly, despite the qualifications marking the links delivered to pages containing search results, Google continues to generate astronomical revenues from its advertising service.

To sum, the current institutionalization of the Web has created a largely egalitarian distribution of representational spaces; all of which retain roughly the same potentiality for publicity. This is not to say that money has no impact upon the ability for an interest to achieve publicity via publication on the Web. Obviously, a firm can market its Web presence in other media, such as newspapers, in an effort to acquire website traffic. Furthermore, through the use of marketing opportunities, assuming the form, for instance, of *Adsense* and other PPC services, traffic can be garnered. However, for multiple reasons, websites can be published with minimal expenses and continue to achieve considerable popularity. Not least among the reasons for this state of affairs is the fact

that search-engines – in most cases – do not allow for the distortion of their rankings that would ensue from the influence of money. Rather, since a search-engine must retain its appeal to end-users, it is motivated to provide query results that are serviceable to the interests of its end-users. As a result, SERPs are the outcome of algorithms designed to estimate the quality of contents; a state that is dependent upon both the value of the website's content in addition to the website's compliance with programming standards. Since website programming is a technology whose mastery can be acquired through autodidactic processes, the ability to effectively publish on the Web is not limited to the skills associated with any particular type of professionalism, whose services might be costly to acquire.

Vying for publicity: Search-engine Optimization. As a result of the pivotal role that search-engines assume in the competitions occurring among the agents who publish on the Web, research in a type of technology has come about, which is geared toward devising techniques for website designers to employ when working to obtain better SERPs. This new field of knowledge is referenced as Search Engine Optimization, (SEO): The study of search-engine indexing procedures; knowledge that is subsequently utilized for the purpose of developing strategies for achieving higher SERPs. These procedures for webpage optimization are particularly significant for websites that contain contents targeting specific markets. Depending upon the market niche to which the website is attempting to appeal, it can be optimized for particular keywords and phrases.

Although SEO is considered in the industry to be a legitimate practice, its classification as a sanguine activity has limits. The distinction to be made here can be expressed in the language belonging to the hacker community: Computer programming –

in its most general sense, which stretches to include SEO under its extension – can fall within one of the two of the following classifications: A programmer can engage in, "Whitehat," computer programming; or, conversely, he or she can practice, "Blackhat," programming. The former is defined in opposition to the latter. Whereas Whitehats are engaged in legal practices that are not intended to bring about consequences that are damaging to others; Blackhats engage in exploits that enact negative ramifications for others who find their websites and applications molested and altered.

In the context of SEO, the distinction between Whitehat and Blackhat programming is largely dictated by the search-engine providers. This is not to say that there is no organic component contributing to the formation of the ethics that have come to define programming practices as either felicitous or malicious. For instance, the practice of SEO spamming, which often targets the comment boxes belonging to weblogs – in an attempt to embed back-links in the weblog directed to the site that the spammer is promoting, which are stereotypically pornographic or pharmaceutical – by most accounts, qualifies as a Blackhat practice. This classification is justified by reference to the disruption it causes for the editor of the weblog, who must manually delete the spam that gets through whatever filtering technology that he or she has installed in his or her weblog apparatus. Another Blackhat practices involves, "keyword stuffing" – A trick that consists of stacking WebPages with keywords and phrases that might have nothing to do with the actual contents of the site.

Since the vendors offering Web portals have an incentive in returning relevant contents to their end-users, these firms, correspondingly, have a vested interest in prohibiting against SEO practices that can manipulate the search-engine bots, or spiders,

in order to prevent a scenario in which a trash site can be granted superior SERPs in comparison to sites offering contents of actual substance and value to end-users. As a consequence, the vendors providing search-engine services took the lead when it comes to establishing the practices deemed to be malicious. Vendors, such as Google, have developed algorithms intended to identify sites embodying the effects of Blackhat SEO. Search-engines that are identified as benefactors of Blackhat SEO are penalized and sometimes removed altogether from the search-engine's indexes.

The antagonistic relationship assumed by search-engine providers and Blackhat SEOs has resulted in a type of cat and mouse game. The spammers are constantly innovating new techniques to artificially obtain higher SERPs. The search-engines, on the other hand, are constantly devising new methods with which to detect what they consider to be infelicitous practices committed by website designers. This cat-and-mouse-game, however, will probably enter extinction because search-engine servicers have developed mousetraps that cannot be foiled, barring incidents that are incited by extraordinary genius. The likely end of Blackhat SEO is attributable to the growing sophistication of the algorithms deployed by search-engines when they weed out deceptive sites from their indexes. Consequently, Blackhat SEO can no longer effectively circumvent the measures deployed by search-engines.

In the aftermath of this conflict, a new type of SEO strategy is emerging that conceives of alternative methods for website optimization. This new practice – what I will refer to as "Organic SEO" – attempts to gradually and incrementally achieve higher SERPs through processes of website composition geared toward providing valuable contents for niche markets, rather than relying upon spamming techniques. As a result,

emphases are placed upon two complimentary considerations: Firstly, the generation of useful contents serviceable to the interests of end-users. Secondly, the optimization of Webpage contents is performed according to techniques that are open and transparent, not deceptive. For example there is no use of keyword stuffing. According to the organic model, sites are designed in compliance with standards defined as best practices by the industry consortia, such as World Wide Web Consortium, (W3C), which endeavors to create best practices for any number of Web programming languages.

Search-engine services often prioritize websites, which conform to W3C standards, when indexing the WebPages. The search-engine provider's positive valuation of W3C compliant Web designs is motivated out of a concern related to the website's usability. Since Internet browsers, such as Firefox or Internet Explorer, render WebPages according to markups made in Web programming languages, pages that conform to standards are displayed more consistently, irrespective of the Internet browser through which the pages are rendered. Of course, the preceding proposition is additionally dependent upon the compliance of Internet browsers with rendering standards. Currently, there is a race for *Acid 3* compliance among the vendors offering Internet browsers.

Learning from Web 2.0. This is an aspect of Populist America that I can detail with intimate knowledge, since it was during the height of my participation that Web 2.0 and Social Media were emerging as paradigms within the website design community. There are manifold definitions in circulation regarding the nature of Web 2.0. The term was first coined by O'Reilly – who has become a guru in the world of Information Technology – therefore, his definition is probably the mostly widely used:

The concept of Web 2.0 began with a conference brainstorming session between O'Reilly and Media Live International. Dale Dougherty, Web pioneer and O'Reilly VP, noted that far from having "crashed," the Web was more important than ever, with exciting new applications and sites popping up with surprising regularity. What's more, the companies that had survived the collapse seemed to have some things in common. Could it be that the dot-com collapse marked some kind of turning point for the Web, such that a call to action such as "Web 2.0″ might make sense? We agreed that it did, and so the Web 2.0 Conference was born (O'Reilly, 2005).

What appears consistent about the startups and survivors, following the first tech bubble deflation, was a characteristic that I shall refer to as "openness:" They emphasized collaboration rather than closed sourcing of contents and media publications, protected either under intellectual Property or under Fair Use. This openness served as a solicitation to others to develop on their services, which were structured in order to create programming environments that were conducive to such collaboration. Therefore, the programming had to be straight forward and, ideally, it had to be open source; or, at the very minimum, it had to have well defined Application Programming Interfaces, (APIs), so that programmers could easily construct additionally components adding to the original platform. This requires the interchange of data, which is the reason why APIs need to be readily well-defined and understandable. These are vital aspects to Web 2.0.

Web 2.0, however, is not limited to communities of software developers. There are many instances where Web 2.0 embodies projects that do not require software programming on the part of the contributors. The most well-known example of this, of course, is the People's Encyclopedia, the Wikipedia. Anyone can contribute to the posting

of contents that will eventually be refined by other contributors, eventually culminating into reference articles. Rarely do people take credit for the work that they perform when contributing to the Wikipedia. This is an aspect of the Web 2.0 Zeitgeist. The Creative Commons, to cite another example, is a legal creation that is meant to offer an alternative to Fair Use. People who elect to publish their materials under a Creative Commons License often desire to have their work reused for other purposes with few restrictions. In fact the most common restriction entailed by a Creative Commons License is to share and share alike. In this regard, the Creative Commons, unlike Fair Use, can be considered an institution belonging to the "Gift Economy," because it based upon altruism.

These conventions that are cited bring about a condition in which communities are formed around shared interests. The communities are strengthened by the fact that people are participants, not simply spectators. When one contributes to the construction of an edifice, he or she forms an affective bond with the construct that he or she has helped to build. If the project is successful then Social Capital will be fostered and people will be more inclined to participate in such ventures in the future. The social software projects are evidence to this conclusion. The success of the Mozilla Foundation and the projects conducted on Sourceforge.net are exemplars.

Dean and Obama Primary Campaigns

The Dean Campaign in the 2004 Democratic Primary was the first organization to utilize the Internet extensively (Shirky, 2005), as a means by which to garner grass-roots participation. Through the use of Internet communications, the Dean Campaign accumulated what had appeared to be considerable support among the Democratic Party

voting public. Despite his seemingly insurmountable lead, Dean's Campaign imploded after the Iowa Caucuses, dispelling the myth of the "Dean juggernaut."

One popular explanation for Dean's precipitous demise is that the establishment resisted his nomination and eventually defeated his campaign (Moulitsas, 2006). According to this narrative, the core interests controlling the Democratic Party were opposed to Dean because he stood in defiance to the party corporate structure; therefore, threatening the oligarchy of institutionalized interests dominating Democratic Party politics. By utilizing Internet-based, decentralized communications the campaign created forums in which grass-roots participants deliberated over the campaign's platform; subsequently, influencing it to some extent.

Unlike the first account, which is propounded by Net-roots activists, Shirky (2005), a former campaign strategist, attributed the collapse to a, "mirage of support." In other words, Dean's polling did not reflect substantial support among those who reported to support him. Therefore, the "inevitability of the Dean Campaign," was the product of self-delusion and ebullient appraisals on the part of the campaign staffers, whose claims apparently infected the group-think of the Washington press core.

There appears to be merit to this argument, especially in light of the events that unfolded four years later. Obama borrowed many of the communicative technologies first utilized by the Dean Campaign. Additionally, due to the unorthodoxy of the approaches implemented by the Campaign, Obama was also labeled as an insurgent: Someone who neglected to follow party protocol; consequently, bypassing many of the Democratic Party's powerbrokers. Instead, Obama chose to make direct appeals to the voting public. Consequently, Obama' campaign was also resisted by the party establishment.

Despite the shared techniques and tactics between the two Democratic Party insurgents, Obama, unlike Dean, was successful, indicating that it were more forces at work than simply the Democratic Party institutional oligarchy's insistence upon the preservation of the status quo. In order to understand the dynamics leading to the divergent outcomes, it is necessary to look beyond the Democratic Party in order to identify other precipitants. I am prepared to suggest that is was Dean's positioning within larger socio-cultural processes that led to his electoral defeat. Specifically, Dean's Campaign was situated in earlier stages of Internet diffusion and adoption. Prior to Dean's campaign, the Internet had yet to be widely established and used as a medium for political discourse, (PEW Research Center, 2005). The Internet had yet to achieve legitimacy as a credible source of information and as a viable medium for political organization. It was still a target of ridicule and suspicion, leading to a scenario in which Internet activity failed to translate into conventional forms of support.

Nevertheless, due to the subsequent adoption of Internet technologies in the years following the 2004 Democratic Primary (Cornfield, 2005), the connotations associated with Internet-use had undergone revision, endowing the Internet with respectability as a conduit facilitating the dissemination of information and as a catalyst for political organization. Rather than an object of ridicule and mockery for newspaper editors and columnists, for them the Internet transformed into a source of competition and consternation. Internet-based media have become legitimate instruments for sociopolitical organization. Additionally, using fundraising as an indicator, the Internet is now an expediter of political mobilization. Extrapolating from these considerations, it is important to remark that Dean's campaign was not delusional in the sense that it was

entirely divorced from reality, as the description, "mirage of support," suggests. Instead, Dean was a "charismatic," figure – in the Weberian sense of the word – in that he was idiosyncratic and he carved out many of the grooves shaping the future course of American electoral politics.

By way of extending the insights laid out by Herodotus (Ping, 2006) – who surmised that it was the quickness and the agility of the forces defending Hellas that allowed it to prevail over the Persian horde (Ping, 2006) – the Dean Campaign might have possessed the quickness and agility necessary to repel and, eventually, defeat a larger competitor that was so heavily stocked that it was rendered immobile and irresponsive to the unconventional tactics employed by its enemy. However, dissimilarly to the Persian War, the "Divine Wind" did not blow in Dean's favor. Instead, externalities to the conflict were pitted against the Dean insurgency, ensuring victory on the part of the old guard. In short, the cultural topography of the American political mass had yet to evolve into a terrain fit for "Net-roots" (Moulitsas, 2006).

Nevertheless, as is the case with the preponderance of history, the victory by the old guard was not total and absolute; rather, it was dialectical and nuanced. The old guard was victorious, but it was partially changed in the process. This resulted in the infusion of aspects of the Dean Campaign into a bloc of the Democratic Party that would break from the establishment and emerge as the Obama Campaign. Similarly to Dean, this campaign circumvented the traditional institutional intermediaries from which the Clinton Campaign had solicited support. In order to acquire the necessary grass-roots backing, the Obama Campaign used the Internet and New Media as conduits through which it communicated directly with the public.

Of course, one could argue that Obama's message was simply more focused and disciplined and that he failed to make campaigning blunders such as Dean's ill-fitted Iowa concessionary holler. Such vacuous politico-speak is intellectually satisfying for the chattering class. Nevertheless, a more elaborate historiography would encompass the sociological dimensions of the Internet, including analyses of transformations in the quantity of Internet adoption in addition to the dynamic qualitative dimensions exhibited by Internet-use. In other words, the current paradigmatic regime, the Strong Programme, ordering the sociology of technology, would compel the conceptualization of Internet technologies according to an analytical model that identifies the Internet's design in conjunction with how the Internet has actually been used by those adopting it. Both conceptions would be tied to one another. The technology is initially designed to possess particular functions. However, its serviceability is impacted by its integration into the activities and practices of those who can find functional values for it that were not originally conceived by its designers. The emergence of technological applications not foreseen by designers influences future considerations by subsequent designers continuing to innovate in that technological paradigm.

I have partially treated this problematization of Internet technology in the sections concerning the development of Web 2.0: a technological phenomenon that Ritzer and Jurgenson, (2010) have described as a form of "Prosumerism." This is defined as an economy in which the boundaries between consumption and production are blurred, resulting in a condition where agents can engage in behaviors that concurrently produce and consume[i]. The consumer/producer binary is just one opposition that has been transcended as a result of Internet diffusion. Another synthesis that has taken place,

transcending geographical oppositions – formed between the local and the global – has been referred to as "G/localization" (Boyd, 2006). This form of sociability involves the convergence of groups, which originally performed activism in different geographic locales independently of one another, forming an internetwork of organizations whose members communicate with one another by virtue of the overlapping of their social networks. The integration of these geographically separated groups is mainly facilitated by Internet-communications, such as internet forums and email lists (Castells, Ed., 2004).

Due to the internetworking, local groups can identify shared interests and values, enabling the coordination of protest initiatives. In this regard, the Information Technology that has facilitated networking across disparate geographic locales has not supplanted intimate face-to-face interactions; rather glocalization has changed the context under which these local interactions transpire. Instead of merely concentrating upon local issues that can be addressed by the participants in provincial contexts, local groups can coordinate their activities with other groups, who collectively form a league of smart-communities, which act in local contexts in ways that reflect global concerns.

Glocalization and networked politics. This phenomenon consisted of the famous European activist movement that was directed against "Frankenfoods" (Schurman, 2003): The genetically modified agricultural produce that was being marketed by American firms. The success of this movement is demonstrative of the effectiveness of glocalized activist effort. The Europeans, who mobilized against the distribution of genetically engineered foods, were able to successfully thwart their importation.

The coalition of groups, who formed this internetwork, targeted their activist efforts, not only against the specific firms responsible for the production of

Frankenfoods, but against the firms who possessed economic relationships with the companies directly involved in the manufacturing of Frankenfoods (Schurman, 2003). Therefore, their approach was networked and multifaceted. They directed their opposition against the whole network of interdependent firms that must transact in order to coordinate this form of commodity production. By severing the relationships formed among the network of Frankenfoods contributors the European movement effectively accomplished its goals.

The Obama Campaign**.** The Obama effort was an amalgam of the techniques originated by the Dean Primary bid as well as previous social movements that successfully incorporated glocalization as a means to counteract the institutions to which they were opposed. The campaign was interested in fostering grass-roots support that could be concentrated in specific locales and proliferated into functioning groups across the primary states. Obama's emphasized organizational efforts in the states that utilized caucuses as a means of primary determination. There was a greater likelihood that devoted followers would put forth the time and effort needed to attend the caucuses and engaged in their ritualism.

Unlike the aforementioned letter from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Obama's tactics placed people under the impression that they were involved in a populist movement. It had the effect of generating massive campaign donations by people who felt as if they were engaged in a new type of politic; one in which people were finally impactful upon their political representatives, not merely consumers whose participatory engagement in democracy consisted of selecting political brands.

Obama amassed a store of voter data; a warehouse of attributes belonging to individuals; a warehouse of information that relied upon New Media technological developments. This storehouse of personalized knowledge enabled the Obama Campaign to interact on a seemingly intimate basis with his supporters, creating the misapprehension of a bottom-to-top enterprise. This interpretation made by the supporters of Obama was reinforced by the candidate's constant appeal for small donations, making the Plebe in American republicanism feel significant and empowered. It was not clientelism, nor was it patronage. It was packaged and marketed as popular political empowerment.

Obama's populism was facilitated by a new means of mass communications, mobile texting, through which ordinary citizens could leverage resources and exert political power in a modality that could overcome the obstacles imposed by the institutions protecting the interests of plutocracy. Furthermore, the use of texting as a means to donate funds to the campaign was a brilliant strategy for two reasons: Most saliently, donating through texting is an impulsive activity. It requires little forethought and planning. Secondly, it provided the campaign with a new means by which to communicate with its supporters: through the convenience of text messaging.

The grammar of this type of communication is peculiar and fascinating. On so many levels, it appears to be an absurdity; an inconvenient and cumbersome activity through which sparsely worded messages, resembling telegraphs, are transmitted from one phone to another phone or from one source to many phones in a mass distribution. It would appear, in most occasions, to be more efficient to simply make a telephone call in order to impart information. However, the grammar of phone conversation can be more

burdensome – and resultantly more undesirable – than the typing of a text message. When calling someone, we are often committed to the exchange of ritualized niceties that are superfluous to the intent behind the communication. Texting dispenses with all of the baggage associated with speaking over the phone; and, therefore, offers a means of executing social-actions without transgressing the elaborate sacred/profane boundaries structuring phone conversation. This is not to say that texting cannot, in some forms and circumstances, produce definitions of deviancy, but the parameters of such distinctions differ in many respects from the grammar of phone conversation. Most importantly, texting seems to possess a quality making it more intimate than mass emails while not as intrusive as phone conversations.

The Evolving use of Hypertext

It remains undetermined just what latent dispositions of hypertext exist entailing serviceability for the construction of a unique communicative medium. The use of hypertext has yet to solidify into routine practices forming an aesthetic and technical discipline. Properties belonging to the materiality of the medium, as an object-in-itself, have yet to be exploited so that hypertext embodies its own distinctive qualities. Therefore, there are no standardized codes fastened to Internet communications, making Internet communications distinct from other media. At this stage in its development, the Web continues to be handled according to practices that are associated with the conventions ordering other, forerunning media.

Such a treatment of a communicative technology during its initial adoption, however, is predictable. When cinema first emerged, it was conceived in the terms belonging to the vocabulary of theatre. The camera was envisioned as a device that

extended visual access to the stagecraft of drama *en mass*. The audience could be expanded by reproducing what had transpired on the stage by presenting it anew to additional spectators in the form of motion picture. It was conceived as a recreation. Therefore, the camera was positioned in front of the stage capturing the drama expressed through stagecraft.

What resulted was an experience that was sterile, absent of the compelling qualities felt by an audience member who observed the stagecraft without mediation. The motion picture failed to recreate the projection of hyper-reality in which an audience member bracketed various objects within of his or her environment in order to maintain a suspension of disbelief: An interpretive frame that collapses the distinction between stagecraft and real-worldly social relationships. Here, in this frame of analysis, drama is experienced as if it is no different than the biographic narratives produced as a result of our dealings and our intimacies with others. We feel catharsis because we experience theatre within this hyper-reality, in which stagecraft and life converge.

The attempt to cinematically reproduce the catharsis incited through theatre failed because we experience motion picture according to different aesthetic principles. The camera is not a passive observer of events. Even the "objectivity" of documentary is not bereft of the director's prejudices. After all, even in documentary, the director must select what is of significance when pointing the camera and focusing its lens. Instead, cinematography is more effectively understood as the narration of drama: The camera is the discerning agent who focuses upon that which is relevant or salient to the diachronicity of events constituting the story.

Cinema that actualizes the potential of the medium consists of a director using the camera to actively tell a story. Through this device – the manipulation of the lens – having it focus upon objects and details as opposed to a sole frame that passively records all that transpires within its scope – the audience vicariously experiences scenes according to various vantages. Sometimes audiences are shown the perspective of a character existing as a constituent part of the unfolding narrative; other times the perspective is situated in the exterior of the story, such as the omnificent standpoint held by the director. Resultantly, we can experience the narrative immanently, causing us to empathize *in situ* with the apprehension and anxiety attributable to a character placed amidst tensions; or we can be positioned not in the unfolding events, but somewhere in liminality, assuming the perspective of a sympathetic or unsympathetic – albeit unobtrusive – deific onlooker; a phenomenology resulting from the director's inducement of dramatic irony: A condition in which a character is unmindful of an impending misfortune, of which audience members are already aware. All of these scenarios are created through the conventions and, "recipes of knowledge," constituting cinematography (Schutz, 1960).

Predominately, the Web continues to be conceptualized in the vocabularies belonging to preexisting media. For example, the typical webpage is structured in accordance to the pagination organizing the content flow of a scroll. As a result, the text is presented as one continuous page, so the reader must use the mouse or keyboard in order to "scroll" down or up as he peruses its contents. Needless to say, such pagination fails to exploit the potentialities of hypertext. With a variety of markup programming standards, serving as artifices, WebPages can be designed to afford the end-user endless

varieties of flow patterns that he can actualize as he reads the text. The flow of contents is not unilaterally determined by the author. The structure of the scroll, on the other hand, imposes a two dimensional interface between the reader and the text. The structure of a scroll prohibits the reader from consuming the contents according to a serialization that deviates from the author's intention.

More sophisticated Web designs will attempt to emulate a codex. The contents are organized into pages that fit the screen used by the end-user. Most of these designs will employ a sitemap, which serves as a table of contents. The references provided in the table will possess links, allowing the end-user to jump to the beginning of chapters, which are denoted by headings. Additionally, other grammatical definitions can be used in order to designate passages to which links connect. Anchors can be placed in order to create the possibility of a link to any point within the flow of contents. Specific lexicon can be bookmarked by the designer, in order to create cross-references, and citations – assuming either the form of a footnote or endnote – can be inserted at any point within the prose.

Nevertheless, even the codex fails to capture the full potentiality of the Web as a medium of communication. The Web's potential for originality exists not in the final product of authorship, but in the workflow process through which authorship is conducted. This is to say that the contents deposited on the Web should be living documents that allow for the end-user to transcend his or her role as a spectator or audience member, in order to interact with the contents as a collaborator.

Web as a catalyst for collaboration. The relationships between and among those who collaborate need not preexist the project itself; meaning, the Web allows for

asynchronous interactions, so that new contributors can enter the project at any point in time. An example would be open-source coding projects that are conducted upon servers, such as *Sourceforge.net*. The projects can be left unrestricted allowing for new members to voluntarily contribute to the projects, even after a project has remained inactive for a substantial period of time. Additionally, there have been experiments performed using the open source weblog platform, *WordPress*. Those interested in devising new collaborative workflow processes have programmed *WordPress* themes that facilitate the authoring of texts through collaborative processes entailing open-ended social networks. Contributors can augment the contents through the commenting feature of the *WordPress* platform. Others can comment upon comments that are already posted; or, if endowed with administrative privileges, the main bodies of text can be amended or revised. Themes can spiral in manifold directions as collaborators converge upon topics of shared interest.

Sometimes the WordPress platform is programmed so that only certain members of the project possess administrative privileges, endowing them with the sole authority to revise certain pages. Nevertheless, the relationships formed among contributors are intended not to be vertical, but predominantly lateral. The elevated privileges are a stopgap measure to prevent against malicious spamming or vandalism. The *Wikipedia* has instituted similar devices to prevent those who lack the community ethics from vandalizing the Wiki's pages. In one instance, the *Wikipedia* had to block IP Addresses that were traceable to Congressional staffers who had littered the *Wikipedia* with propaganda and libelous material.

Despite instances, such as politicos, who use platforms such as the Wikipedia for malicious ends, the behavior of those who participate in Wikis overwhelmingly embodies

communitarian values (Cunningham, 2001). The ethics, which form the Zeitgeist of the Web, underlie these collaborative initiatives. These projects all value openness and transparency, and, for the most part, they encourage inclusivity and organization along horizontal dimensions. Therefore, these values are generative of networked social relationships as opposed to structures that are proto-corporate and hierarchical in character.

Notes

[1] I have been questioned by sociologists whether the party had some basis among people who had formed ongoing reciprocities prior to the organization's construction of a Web presence, or whether the formation of the community was a disembodied phenomenon: A Web-based collectivity that was emergent entirely in Web spaces? This is an interesting query because it relates to how the social networking formed upon the Internet differs from social networking that is forged in real spaces; begging the question, are the relationships formed from computer mediated communications of a nature whereby they facilitate the mobilization of social movements? As touched upon in the *Literature Review*, this mobilization is an event that presumably requires Social Capital: A sociological property that is translatable to the levels of trust existing among individuals in a social group. It has been questioned whether CMC can foster Social Capital among social actors, because it is presumed that the solidification of trust requires embodied interaction: Face-to-face engagements among the actors who cultivate trust among one another from their successes at undertaking communal projects. I will simply add that Boldin had contacts in the Los Angeles area, who were involved in political activism

[2] This position also reflects the Green Party's implicit commitment to preservation of the processes of representativeness entailed by Pluralism.

[3] With the exception of the Green economic philosophy, "Communitarian Economics," which conforms largely with the political organization, Localism, that is advanced in this paper.

[4] Theoretically, Libertarians can support environmentalism. However, it is premised upon property rights. If a polluter damages other people's property, then he or she can be subject to tort litigation. Unfortunately, without the burdensome evidence needed for a court ordered injunction, environmental issues can only be treated, within this framework, on a *post hoc* basis.

[5] Rawls is typically considered to have argued for a political structure that is referenced as liberal democracy. However, both liberal democracy and Pluralism embody the principle of representativeness, which they use to legitimate the sociopolitical stratification distinguishing between elites and masses. For purposes of this paper, I treat Pluralism and liberal democracy as roughly equivalent.

[6] The term, "link-authority," is not, to my knowledge, used by Google. Rather, the expression is used by commentators and analysts who describe, in basic terms, how Google determines relevancy when returning results for queries that are entered into its search-engine.

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